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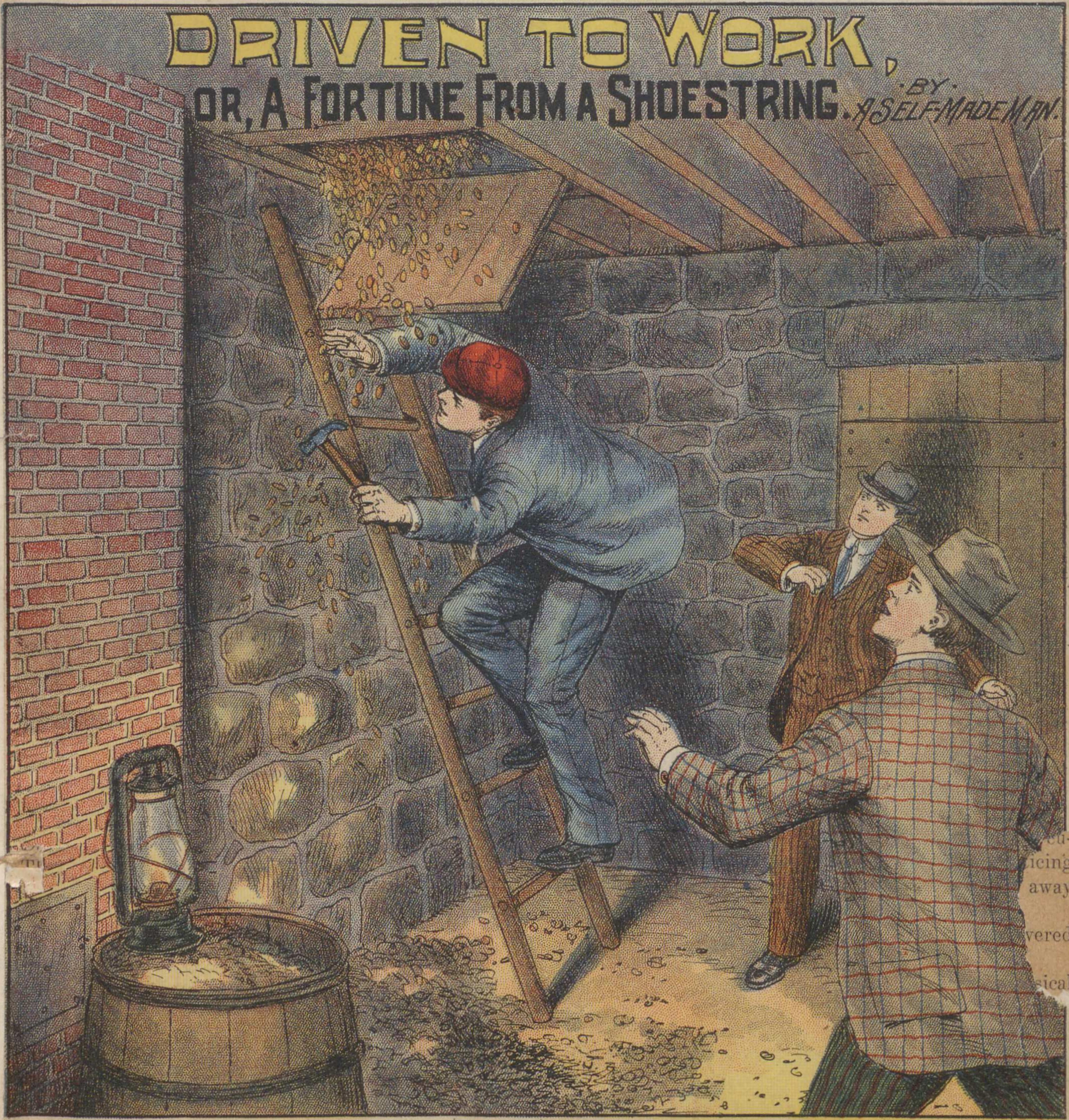
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FAME AND FORTUNE

STORIES OF BOYS **WEEKLY.** WHO MAKE MONEY

DRIVEN TO WORK,
OR, A FORTUNE FROM A SHOESTRING.

BY
A SELF-MADE MAN.



Dave gave the trapdoor a blow with the hammer, and the bolt broke. Down fell the door, and with it a shower of gold coins. Cries of astonishment escaped his two friends, and Dave descended the ladder.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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DRIVEN TO WORK

OR,

A FORTUNE FROM A SHOESTRING

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

A PLUCKY RESCUE.

"It feels good to be back in the city again," said Dave Darnley, a well-dressed boy, as, grip in hand, he stepped out of the Grand Central Station into Forty-second Street one sunshiny June afternoon.

"Keb—keb, sir," shouted a chorus of voices from a line of drivers with whips in their hands.

"What's the use of blowing in a half dollar or more on a cab when I've paid the transfer people to carry my trunk to the house, and a Madison Avenue car will take me to my door?" said the boy to himself.

He started for the corner of Depew Place to wait for the car.

The street in front of the station was full of moving vehicles, and one had to be very careful to keep his wits about him in crossing to the other side.

Dave, however, had no occasion to cross.

The corner he was aiming for was at the western end of the station, perhaps fifty yards from where he came out of the building.

Suddenly above the uproar of traffic he heard a shrill scream.

He turned and looked in the direction whence it came.

A slender girl, in crossing the street toward the station, had slipped and fallen in the path of a rapidly-driven cab.

Realizing her peril Dave dropped his grip, dashed into the street, and seizing the girl in his strong arms, swung

her on to the curb in less time than it takes to describe the incident.

But quick as he was the cab grazed both of them in spite of the driver's best efforts to turn his horse aside.

However, a miss is as good as a mile, as neither was hurt.

The girl was so badly frightened that she hung dazed and almost fainting on the boy's arm.

"Brace up, miss, you're all right," he said, reassuringly. In a moment or two she revived.

"You saved my life," she murmured, their eyes meeting.

Dave felt a thrill run through his nerves, for such eyes, so beautiful and expressive, he had never met with before.

And her face was just as lovely as her eyes—a face perfect in its contour, and without a flaw.

She was modestly attired in garments that, though inexpensive in material, fitted her sylph-like form perfectly.

She seemed much embarrassed by the stares of the curious bystanders who had gathered around them, noticing which, Dave snatched up his grip and drew the girl away toward the corner.

By the time they reached it she had almost recovered from the shock.

"I thank you for saving me," she said, in a low, musical tone. "I shall remember with gratitude what you have done for me."

"You are welcome, miss. I am glad I was able to render you a service."

"May I ask your name?" she said.

"David Darnley. Will you favor me with yours?"

"Elise Preston. I will now say good-by, thanking you once more for coming to my aid."

Thus speaking she tripped away, and was soon lost to his view in the crowd that was moving toward Fifth Avenue.

"By George! She's a peach and no mistake!" muttered Dave, as his eyes followed her disappearing figure. "Shall I ever see her again?"

A Madison Avenue car came along, turning the corner, but he failed to board it, so taken up was he with thoughts of the fair girl, who had evidently made a great impression on him.

He stood, holding on to his grip, quite unconscious of the surging crowd that jostled him on its way to the station down the street.

His thoughts were following the girl who by this time was well on her way up the block.

He was tempted to follow her and see if he could find out where she lived.

Still it was by no means certain that she was bound home, and the effort might result only in a wild goose chase.

At length he woke up to the reality of things as a second Madison Avenue car came along, and with some reluctance he boarded it and took his seat inside.

But he could not forget the girl he had saved as the car bowled along northward toward the swell home where he lived.

He lived with his uncle who was a widower with one son, an aristocratic youth between whom and Dave there was little sympathy or friendship.

This young man's name was Herbert Dent, and he was a year older than Dave.

Dave was just home from a boarding academy where he had been graduated with honor.

He expected to be sent to Princeton in the early fall to begin the regulation four-years' college course.

Herbert himself had already finished his freshman term there, and had been home a week.

He was very different in personal appearance from Dave, whose good-looking, sun-burned face was frank, open and manly.

Herbert, on the contrary, was dark, with crisp, curly hair, black eyes and splendid teeth.

He would have been almost a beau ideal of youthful beauty, for he was the picture of his proud, handsome mother, dead two years, but for an unnatural and sickly pallor that suggested a round of dissipation and a bitter, sarcastic expression when he smiled.

He had brought home with him for a lengthy visit an older classmate, named Gideon Wells, who had been a crony of his during his freshman course.

Wells was twenty-one years of age, dressed in fine garments and with perfect taste, and his manners were those of a gentleman, but what he didn't know about the world, especially the gay part of it, was hardly worth mentioning.

He was a wolf in sheep's clothing, with no more conscience than a stone.

A perfect dissembler, a brilliant talker, and fairly well educated, he could meet all men on their own ground and create a favorable impression.

In attaching himself to Herbert Dent his purpose was thoroughly selfish.

He had lost a competence in one way or another, and in order to keep up appearances and indulge his acquired and rather expensive tastes it became necessary for him to prey on others.

He had pitched on Herbert, whose father was a wealthy and distinguished politician, as a fitting dupe, and worked himself so well into the lad's good graces that they had become quite inseparable.

Herbert was flattered by the attention his elder classmate paid him, and became Wells' treasurer without realizing the fact.

He didn't actually loan him money, for Wells assumed to be independently well off; but he lost considerable sums of money to him through card and billiard playing.

Long ago Herbert had spent his monthly allowances, and when pressed for money raised it on notes of hand which Wells got a Princeton money lender, named Silas Hale, to cash at a big discount.

The money lender took chances because of the political prominence of Herbert's father and his known wealth; but there was a limit to his accommodation on such security, so when Wells took Herbert Dent to his house, just before the close of the term, to raise a large sum for special vacation purposes, the usurer refused to cough up any more without some real, tangible security.

Herbert had none to offer, but Wells was equal to the emergency.

He told the money lender they would call again.

They did call again a few days later and Herbert offered a ninety-day note for \$500, apparently indorsed by his father, and produced letters with his father's signature to show that the indorsement was genuine.

After some hesitation on Silas Hale's part he got the money, less \$75, which the money lender charged for the accommodation.

Next day Herbert and his friend Wells left for New York and had been living for a week at the brown-stone Madison Avenue residence owned by Mr. Dent, when our story opens.

That week had been one round of gaiety for the pair, and every cent of the \$425 Herbert had raised on the note had gone the way of his other money and he was strapped, with his next monthly allowance two weeks in the perspective.

CHAPTER II.

THE RASCALLY SCHEME.

At the moment that Dave Darnley, Herbert's cousin, came out of the Grand Central Station and saved Elise Preston's life, Herbert Dent and Gideon Wells were seated in the former's room talking the dilemma over.

The young man's apartment, which was richly furnished, reflected his tastes and follies, and it was well for him that his father never intruded upon him there.

The dressing table and other points of vantage were profusely covered with pictures of well-known stage beauties, some of them bearing the autographs of the fair original, and intermingled with these were photos of

schoolmates in football, baseball and athletic costumes, and also men who stood high in the pugilistic world.

The latter were mostly in ring attire, posed in characteristic attitudes.

The room was also littered with a variety of sporting paraphernalia which Herbert never used, but displayed for effect.

Parti-colored black and orange flags were tacked against the walls—the colors of Princeton University, and in one spot the flag of Harvard and the blue of Yale were crossed underneath a stuffed tiger whose feet were upon them, while from his mouth streamed two long printed accounts of Princeton's baseball supremacy that year over its college rivals.

There were lots of other things about the room that indicated Herbert Dent was going "the pace that kills," under the able tutelage of Gideon Wells.

Wells was lounging in an easy chair with a cigar in his mouth.

Herbert was sprawled off on a divan with an imported cigarette in his fingers.

"I wish I knew how I could raise the dust," said the latter, in an impatient tone. "We've got a date on tonight and haven't a dollar in my clothes."

"Don't worry, Herb. I'll see you through," replied Wells, nonchalantly. "If it wasn't that the estate I've inherited with my sister was tied up till she comes of age you shouldn't want for a dollar."

The estate in question existed only in Wells' imagination, and he had no sister.

"I know it, Gid," responded his dupe. "You're a good fellow. I don't know how I should have got through the term without you. A friend in need is a friend indeed."

There was no doubt about that, for Wells was certainly in need—of money.

"Don't mention it, my dear fellow," he said, in a tone and manner he could assume with telling effect. "Once I cotton to a chap I'll do anything in the world for him. I don't know why I should have taken to you, but since I have I'll stick to you like wax."

He certainly would as long as there was anything in it for him.

"I believe you, old man. Now can't you put your wits to work and figure out some way by which I can raise funds?" said Herbert.

"You might try Silas Hale again," suggested Wells.

"What, take a trip to Princeton on the chance of pulling his leg? It wouldn't pay, for I don't believe he'll do any more business with me till I settle up those unsecured I O Us. He as good as dunned me for the money when I got the advance on that bill with my father's indorsement."

At the mention of the bill in question a slight grin wreathed the mouth of Gideon Wells.

"You wouldn't have to go to Princeton to see him, Herb," he said.

"Why not? That's where he lives, isn't it?"

"No. His home is in this city, up in the Bronx. He rents the Princeton house merely to accommodate patrons of his in that town and at the university, and is only to be consulted on financial business there twice a week

or by special appointment. During the rest of the time he carries on his business either at his office on upper Broadway, or at his house evenings."

"I suppose he has a big business."

"He certainly has. He is well known in the Tenderloin. His head carries secrets that would make your head swim if you had any idea of them. Many a theatrical angel has had to come to him to raise funds necessary to keep out of court. His principal business, however, is advancing funds to the sons and other relatives of rich men, like yourself, for instance."

"I don't think there is any use of me calling on him again. I don't want to be turned down," said Herbert, lighting a fresh cigarette.

"I suppose you can't get the governor to come up with your allowance ahead of time, eh?"

"No, he's particular on that point. I've tried it already, and it won't work. Besides I don't want him to suspect that I'm getting away with so much money. He might take it into his head to follow us around some night, and if he did the result would not be pleasant to me. I'm afraid it might queer you, too, in his estimation. Just at present he has a high opinion of you, and I want him to keep it. If he should get the idea into his head that we were having too gay a time he might think because you're older than me that you're leading me astray. He'd cut your visit short, for he never minces matters. I wouldn't like that, for I'd feel lost without you."

Gideon Wells bit his lip and did not reply.

A few moments of silence ensued, during which he looked hard at the decorated ceiling and seemed to be thinking.

"By the way, you expect your cousin, David Darnley, home from school this afternoon, don't you?" he said, at length.

"Yes, and I wish he wasn't coming," replied Herbert, with a dark look.

"Why so? Don't you two hitch?"

"No, we don't," answered Herbert, with emphasis. "I hate him."

"Why."

"Don't ask me. I never liked him from the day his mother died and he came here to live, and I never will."

"Your father told me last night that Darnley had graduated from the academy, and that he proposes to send him to Princeton this fall. He expects he will be company for you."

"Company for me!" exclaimed Herbert, with a sneer. "I guess not."

"I judge he's not just your style."

"I should say not."

"Has he prospects of his own?"

"No, he hasn't. His mother, my aunt, married an artist, who was not successful. He died worth nothing but a small life insurance which my aunt used up to live on. Dave Darnley is a pauper, but it happened to be his luck to be the son of my father's favorite sister, so it's likely he'll get a fat slice of what ought to come to me."

"And that's why you don't care for him," said Wells, with a faint chuckle.

"That's the chief reason," admitted Herbert, frankly, "but there are others."

"Look here, Herb," said Wells, after another brief pause, "perhaps you can raise the needful through this cousin of yours."

"Raise it through him!" cried Herbert, with a look of surprise and disgust.

"Yes. I think I see how you can do it, and at the same time take the wind out of his sails."

"What do you mean?" asked Herbert, sitting up and looking hard at his companion.

"Your father has a good opinion of Darnley, I suppose?"

"Yes. That fellow has wormed himself into his good graces."

"Suppose he were to suddenly find out that your cousin was unworthy of his confidence—what would he do?"

"He'd fire him out of the house so quick that it would make his head swim; and he might do the same to me if he learned that the note I gave Silas Hale bore his——"

"Never mind that," quickly interrupted Wells, with a slight frown.

"My old man has a quick temper, and does things on the spur of the moment when he gets worked up."

"So much the better," said Wells. "Now listen to me. I've a plan. If it works it will put, say a thousand dollars, into your pocket in a few days, and your cousin will have to shoulder the responsibility."

"What is the scheme?" asked Herbert, eagerly.

"Can you get me a specimen of your cousin's handwriting?"

"Yes, I got a letter from him this morning which I chuck in that waste-paper basket. You can fish it out if it's any good to you."

"One thing more. Don't jump when I tell you. Can you get me a blank check from your father's check book?"

Herbert gave a gasp and looked at his Mephistophelian friend.

"I see what you're getting at," he said. "You intend to draw a check for a thousand dollars——"

"Two thousand—one thousand you get; five hundred I get; two hundred say for expenses—while the balance you must put in a corner of your cousin's dressing case as evidence to be subsequently used against him when the check comes to your father's notice."

"Who is going to cash this check?"

"Who? David Darnley himself. It will be made out to his order."

"He won't carry such a check to the bank without knowing the reason——"

"Leave that to me."

"Besides, he'll have to be identified."

"I'll attend to that."

"I'm afraid this is a risky game of yours, Gid," said Herbert, doubtfully. "If it should be traced to you——"

"Let me do the worrying. I'll take all the chances of that."

Herbert lighted another cigarette and looked a bit uneasy.

"I'd like to do Dave Darnley up the worst way," he said, "but——"

"This is the finest chance you'll ever have to do it," responded Wells. "Your father will never forgive him for forging his name to a check, and consequently you will in due time come into the whole of your governor's property instead of losing a quarter, or a third of it, as things perhaps stand now, to your cousin."

"If I thought there wasn't much risk——"

"Whatever risk there is I'll take—for your sake," said the astute Gideon Wells. "Will you get me that blank check?"

"When do you want it?"

"The sooner the better."

"I'll go down to the library now and see if I can get at the book."

"Do so," said Wells, tossing his cigar butt into the cuspidor.

At that moment there was a ring at the hall door bell.

The servant answered it and Dave Darnley entered the hall in time to greet his cousin Herbert as the latter tripped downstairs on his questionable errand.

CHAPTER III.

SPRINGING THE TRAP.

"Hello, Herb," said Dave, grasping his cousin's hand with the utmost cordiality. "Glad to see you, old fellow."

"Glad to see you, too," replied Herbert, with a hypocritical smile. "I've been expecting you all day."

"All day! Why I wrote you that I'd be home by the train due at the Grand Central Station at four-thirty. How is uncle?"

"He is well. He is out at present."

"I suppose I'll see him before dinner."

"Very likely; but you must excuse me. I'm going into the library for a book."

"A book, eh? I never thought you were much of a bookworm," laughed Dave.

"I'm not. My friend Wells wants it."

"Is that your college chum? Your father mentioned him in one of his letters to me."

"Yes. He's staying with me awhile."

"Here?"

"Sure. He's a good fellow. I'll introduce you to him later on."

"All right. I'll be glad to know him. By the way, why didn't you answer the letters I sent you to Princeton?"

"I had too many things to do," replied Herbert, evasively.

"You might have written once at any rate. I was dead curious to learn how you were getting on there. I suppose you were hazed when you first went?"

"Yes," said Herbert, edging toward the door of the library.

"Well, I'll expect you to tell me about everything by and by. I'll run up to my room now and fix up a bit."

Thus speaking Dave turned away and tripped upstairs. Herbert watched him go with a disagreeable look on his face.

"I hope Gid will fix him," he muttered. "What right

has he to share in any of my father's property? If it wasn't that I thought he'd get into trouble I wouldn't take any chances with this forged check business even to get a thousand dollars. But to do that mutt I'm willing to run a certain amount of risk."

He entered the library and remained there perhaps fifteen minutes.

Then he rejoined his friends upstairs in his room.

"Did you get it?" asked Wells.

"Yes. I took it from the back of the book. It's about a hundred numbers ahead," said Herbert, handing it to him.

"That won't make any difference," said Wells. "The paying teller doesn't give any attention to the number that's on a check. All he's interested in is the signature."

The speaker put the blank check carefully in his pocketbook beside the letter written by Dave Darnley, which he had fished out of the waste-paper basket while Herbert was downstairs.

"My cousin has come," said Herbert, lighting another cigarette.

"Has he?" replied Wells. "I shall be glad to meet him."

"I'll introduce you to him before dinner."

"Shall we take him out with us tonight?"

"Not on your life. I don't want him tagging around with me. We're going to meet Miss Fitzallen at the stage door of the New Amsterdam and take her over to Nector's to supper. We don't want him along."

"Just as you say, my dear fellow," said Wells, carelessly.

"Here's a couple of cigars I took out of the governor's private box. They're prime," and Herbert handed them to his friend.

"I'll smoke them later. I know what they are, for I've sampled them. They're three for a dollar. Your father keeps the best of everything on tap. It's quite a pleasure to roost under his hospitable roof."

Gideon Wells meant every word of that, for he was having the time of his life just at present, and he hoped it would last.

With that end in view he tried to make himself solid with Mr. Dent.

He succeeded pretty well, for he knew how to handle people.

That was one of his great talents.

He could interest an orthodox minister one minute, and five minutes afterward be hail fellow well met with a prize-fighter.

He possessed a fund of information on all subjects that was apparently inexhaustible.

At any rate he talked politics with Mr. Dent in a way that astonished that gentleman, who was well up in political economy.

In the course of half an hour Herbert went up to Dave's room and brought him down to his own, where he introduced him to Wells.

"Glad to know you, Darnley," said Wells, in such an open and friendly way that Dave liked him at once.

Wells lost no time in worming himself into Dave's good graces, and easily succeeded.

Dave greeted his uncle in the library just before din-

ner was announced, and Mr. Dent gave him a cordial welcome, for he really liked the boy, and secretly wished his son was more like him in many respects.

After dinner everybody adjourned to the library, but Wells soon excused himself on the ground that he had an engagement with a friend at the Princeton Club, while Herbert said he was going to call on a certain young lady.

Both excuses were fictitious, for Wells, who went out first, waited for Herbert on the corner of Fifth Avenue and a side street, and they went off together.

Half an hour later they might have been seen playing billiards in a gilded establishment devoted to that sport and pool, in the vicinity of Broadway and Forty-second Street.

Dave remained with his uncle in the library, the boy enlightened Mr. Dent about his progress at school, and subsequently the gentleman left the house to pass a couple of hours at one of his clubs.

One afternoon, three days later, a well-dressed man stepped up to Dave as he came down the steps of the stoop in front of his home.

"I beg your pardon, young man, but I believe you are David Darnley, Mr. Dent's nephew," he said, with an engaging smile.

"Yes, sir."

"My name is Austin. I am treasurer of the Calumet Club. I just came from Mr. Dent, who is going to take the three-five limited for Albany——"

"Why, I thought Mr. Dent went to Albany this morning?" replied Dave in some surprise. "I went with him to the Grand Central Station this morning and carried his grip as far as the gate, where the man looked at his ticket."

"He went as far as Poughkeepsie, but had to come back," said the man glibly.

"Is that so? Well, what did you want to see me about?"

"I've got a check which your uncle made out in your name. It's for \$2,000. He wants you to cash it for him."

"Wants me to cash it!" cried Dave, in some astonishment.

"Yes. He was unable to go to the bank himself. Here is the note he told me to hand you."

Dave took the envelope, opened and read the following:

"Dear Nephew—Please cash the enclosed check for me at my bank on Fifth Avenue, and hand the money to Mr. Austin, the bearer. Sign your name above the words 'I guarantee indorsement as genuine,' preceding my signature. Yours in haste,

DUDLEY DENT."

Dave recognized his uncle's handwriting and had no doubt but it was all right.

"Very well," he said, putting the note in an inner pocket, "I'll go around to the bank with you, Mr. Austin."

A look of satisfaction shone from the man's eyes as he spoke and they started off together.

Dave indorsed the check at the bank and handed it to the paying teller.

As the amount was large the teller was cautious, despite the fact that Mr. Dent's signature appeared to be genuine, and his indorsement on the back as well.

"Are you David Darnley?" he asked the boy.

"Yes, sir. I'm Mr. Dent's nephew."

The teller looked at the check for a moment or two and finally went to his case of signatures to make sure of Mr. Dent's handwriting.

A close comparison satisfied him that the signature was genuine, but he had no assurance that Dave really was the person he represented himself to be.

"Here, sign your name on that piece of paper," he said. Dave went to a desk and did so.

The teller compared it with his indorsement.

The two were practically identical.

Then he paid over the money and Dave rejoined Austin, who had carefully kept in the background, not even venturing into the bank.

"I think you'd better give me a receipt for this money, Mr. Austin," said Dave, who thought it well to be on the safe side.

"It isn't necessary," replied the man. "You have Mr. Dent's note."

Dave said nothing, but taking out the note wrote with his stylographic pen the following words under those in his uncle's handwriting:

"Received from David Darnley \$2,000, representing cash received on check above referred to."

"Just sign that, please," he said.

The man hesitated, but finally wrote his name—James Austin.

Dave then handed him the money, and they parted at the corner.

CHAPTER IV.

A CHAPTER OF TROUBLE.

Dave enjoyed the first days of his long vacation one way or another, but not in company with his cousin or Gideon Wells.

Those two, while they treated him with assumed cordiality, fought shy of his society out of doors.

That fact didn't worry Dave much, as he never had been on close terms of intimacy with Herbert.

Each had his own set of friends, though they frequently met at the same social gathering.

Dave often thought of Elise Preston.

She was a girl that one could not soon forget.

At any rate Dave had lost his heart to her, though it seemed unlikely that he would ever meet her again.

Herbert and his friend were having a merry time on three-quarters of the amount realized on the check forged by Wells, who was a real Jim the Penman when it came to imitating handwriting of any kind.

The man to whom Dave had handed the \$2,000, under the impression he was carrying out Mr. Dent's instructions, was a trusted acquaintance of Wells', and he duly turned the money over to the young collegian, and received \$100 for his services, according to agreement.

At the same time he informed Wells that he had been obliged to sign for the money on the note, which it was evident Darnley proposed to keep for his own protection.

Under these circumstances Wells deemed it a matter of

importance to get the note away from Dave, lest it act as a boomerang later on.

This job he turned over to Herbert.

That young gentleman entered his cousin's room in the dead of night and deftly searched his clothes.

He found the note and handed it to Wells, who put it in his pocket, intending to destroy it.

While hanging his coat in the closet of his room that night the envelope fell out of his pocket, and he unconsciously kicked it into a corner, where it lay unnoticed.

Mr. Dent remained several days in Albany, where the legislature was in session.

He was interested in having a certain piece of legislation enacted.

On the day succeeding his return Herbert and Wells were sitting together, as was their custom, in the former's room.

"I wonder when the flare-up will happen?" Herbert said, with a wicked little laugh. "I am anxious to see what will happen to that cousin of mine."

"The thing is likely to come to a head today," replied Wells. "I made the acquaintance of a chap who knows the cashier of the Fifth Avenue bank, and I told him to hint to the cashier that there was something wrong about that \$2,000 check. That will probably lead to a communication between the bank and your father, and then—but why anticipate?"

"You're a corker, Gid. You think of everything," said Herbert.

At that moment there was a knock on the door.

"Come in," called out Herbert.

One of the servants opened the door and said:

"There is a man down in the hall who wants to see you on important business."

"Who is he?"

"He didn't give me his name, sir."

"Well, go down and find out his name and what his business is. Then tell him I'm out and to call again. I don't feel like walking downstairs to see any old—"

At that juncture the domestic was pushed aside and a small, shrewd-looking man of perhaps fifty years, dressed in a business suit, elbowed his way into the room.

"I thought I'd save you the trouble of coming down by coming up myself," said the visitor, with a curious smile.

Herbert stared at him in some consternation.

"Mr. Hale," he said, "to what do I owe the pleasure of this unexpected visit?"

"I'm sorry for your sake, young man, that certain discoveries I have made left me no alternative but to call on you and demand an immediate settlement of your obligations."

"I suppose you refer to those unsecured I O Us of mine. If you will call in a week I will take them up."

"I include them in my demand, but I refer particularly to your promissory note for \$500, bearing, as you assured me, your father's indorsement. Well, I have found out that the indorsement is a forgery."

"A forgery!" exclaimed Herbert, turning pale.

"Yes, a forgery," replied the money lender, sharply; "but very cleverly executed. Young gentleman, that paper places you in my power. The note is for \$500, and your

various I O Us amount to \$300 more. If tonight before twelve o'clock you do not bring to my house in the Bronx—your friend knows the address—double that amount—”

“Double!” cried Herbert, aghast at the usurer’s demand. “Sixteen hundred dollars!”

“Exactly. Sixteen hundred dollars. If you fail to bring it before the hour I have stated I shall make it my business to call on your father tomorrow, show him the promissory note, as well as your I O Us, and ask him to take them up. Should he refuse to do so I will have you arrested for securing money on an instrument with a forged indorsement. You see, I’m a plain-spoken man, and I always come to the point without any unnecessary frills,” said the money lender with a cold smile.

“Your demand is outrageous,” cried Herbert, angrily. “You have not advanced me altogether over \$650. The difference between that and the face of the notes, or \$800, represents, in my opinion, an uncommonly good profit. But to double the full amount, to which you have not the shadow of a claim, is——”

“What?” asked Silas Hale, coldly.

“Well, it’s a swindle.”

“What do you call your own part in the transaction? Imposing a promissory note on me with a forged indorsement which you assured me was genuine.”

“How do you know it is forged? I deny that it is.”

“Your father shall be the arbiter if you desire to put it to a test.”

“But I don’t want my father to know anything about these notes of mine?”

“Don’t you?” replied the money lender, sarcastically. “Your own words convict you, young gentleman. If your father is not aware that you gave me that promissory note, how, then, can his indorsement be genuine?”

Herbert was staggered, and knew not what to say.

“We are wasting words in arguing this matter. You are in my power, as I said before, and that enables me to turn the screws on you. Bring me \$1,600 tonight before I close up at midnight or take the consequences.”

Having said all he intended to say, Silas Hale abruptly turned around and left the room, and a minute later the house.

Herbert stared after him in speechless dismay.

As for Gideon Wells, although cool and impassive, he was not a little concerned himself.

If this unfortunate climax came to an issue on the morrow how would he come out of it?

He was the forger of the indorsement, and Herbert knew it.

If Herbert, driven to bay in his father’s presence, confessed the truth, Mr. Dent would certainly make matters warm for the person who had imitated his signature.

Gideon Wells saw before his mind’s eye a cell in the Tombs, with the prospect of not less than ten years at Sing Sing to follow.

Not only that, but the matter of the forged check might be brought to his door.

Cool and clever as Wells was in his rascality he could not consider the immediate future without some misgivings.

“Gid, what in thunder am I to do?” asked Herbert, in a funk.

“You can’t pay the \$1,600 can you?”

“Of course I can’t.”

“Then we must take the bull by the horns some way.”

“How?”

“How much of the thousand have you left?”

“About \$600.”

“I have \$300. You must get that \$300 you concealed in your cousin’s dressing case. That makes \$1,200. We’ll take that up to Hale’s house this evening and give it to him on account, promising him the balance later on.”

“That will leave us flat broke.”

“It can’t be helped, my dear fellow. Better be broke than face the consequences of exposure. You’ll get your monthly allowance in a few days. I dare say we can manage to worry along during the interval. I’ll write to the executor of our estate and see if he will let me have a hundred or two on account of what will eventually come to me. I can’t promise that he will, for the income I believe is all taken up with the educational and other expenses of myself and my sister; but I’ll give him a strong game of talk, and then hope for the best.”

Wells spoke with the frankness of a person telling the truth, and Herbert had implicit faith in all his statements.

“All right,” replied Herbert, breathing easier. “We’ll do that; but it goes against my grain to be fleeced in such an outrageous way.”

“It’s the way Hale has of getting back at a person who tries to do him.”

“But I never intended to do him.”

“Of course you didn’t; but you can’t convince him of that.”

It was about this time that another strenuous scene was being enacted in the library. The participants were Dave Darnley and his uncle.

Dave had been accorded the privilege of the library, and he spent a portion of his time there, for he loved to read good books.

He was seated there deeply absorbed in Irving’s “Alhambra,” when Mr. Dent, looking as dark as a thunder gust, entered the house and went straight to the room.

“Good afternoon, uncle,” said Dave, pleasantly, but to his surprise Mr. Dent, instead of his customary greeting, brushed by and went directly to his desk, which he opened.

Then without sitting down he drew out his pocketbook and took from it the check forged by Gideon Wells.

“David Darnley, come here,” he said harshly.

Dave put down the book and advanced to the desk, wondering at the forbidding appearance of his uncle.

Evidently there was something wrong.

“Did you present that check at my bank and draw the money on it?” asked the politician, sternly.

“Yes, sir,” replied Dave, in so frank a tone and without the least evidence of confusion, that Mr. Dent was somewhat taken back.

“You admit it, then?”

“Certainly, sir. Why not? You sent it to me with written instructions authorizing me to cash it for you.”

"I sent it to you with written instructions authorizing you to cash it for me?" cried his uncle.

"Yes, sir. Is there anything wrong? You got the money from Mr. Austin, didn't you?"

"Mr. Austin!"

"Yes, sir. The treasurer of the Calumet Club. He brought your letter, containing that check, to me."

"What kind of story are you trying to tell me?" asked Mr. Dent, angrily.

"Why, the truth, of course," replied the astonished boy. "I have your letter to prove it, and I took a receipt for the money from Mr. Austin, too."

"Let me see the letter which you say you received from me."

Dave felt in his pockets for it, but to his surprise failed to find it.

"I'm afraid I must have lost it, sir, which is very unfortunate if there is any question about the transaction," he said.

"Lost it, eh?" said the politician, with a sneer. "What did you do with the 2,000 you received on this check?"

"I told you that I handed it to Mr. Austin, the treasurer of the Calumet Club. You directed me in your letter to do so."

Mr. Dent was growing angrier every moment.

"There is no such person as Austin in the Calumet Club," he roared.

"There isn't?" ejaculated Dave, in some bewilderment.

"You presented that check and drew the money some hours after I left the city for Albany. You took advantage of my absence to cash your forged check, and the wonder of it all is that you have the assurance to brazen your rascality out."

"Sir!" gasped Dave.

"You're an ingrate! An ingrate, do you understand? You have stung the hand that has befriended and would have made a man of you. Were you not the son of my dead sister," his voice faltered for an instant, but immediately tightened up, "I would hand you over to the police to be dealt with according to law. As it is the evidence of your duplicity shall remain only in my memory to remind me that I once nourished a viper."

As he spoke he tore the forged check in quarters and tossed them into his waste-paper basket.

"Now go and pack up your things and leave the house at once—at once, do you understand? The \$2,000 you have stolen from me is all you will ever get from me. Make the most of it. Now go. I wish never to look on your face again."

CHAPTER V.

DRIVEN FROM HIS HOME.

Dave was amazed and stunned by his uncle's words.

His look of helpless bewilderment was taken by Mr. Dent as evidence of his guilt, and his hastily formed resolution to throw the boy out of his heart and home was strengthened.

"Uncle Dudley," began Dave at last, but Mr. Dent interrupted him fiercely.

"Don't call me uncle any more. You have forfeited all

claim upon my consideration. Leave the room, and the house as soon as you can."

"Do you mean to say that you accuse me of forging that \$2,000 check?"

"I have said all I'm going to say on the subject. I want you to go."

"You are laboring under a terrible error, sir," protested Dave.

"Will you leave the room? I want no excuses or lies from you on the subject. They will not avail you. I am satisfied of your guilt. I want nothing further to do with you."

Dave drew a long breath and then his manhood asserted itself.

"Very well," he said calmly, "you have judged and condemned me without permitting me to say anything in my own defense. Before I leave your presence I wish to solemnly declare that I had nothing to do with that check but to cash it by your written orders, which, unfortunately, I am unable to produce. If the check, as you assert, is a forged one, then the note which accompanied it was forged too. It looks as if I were the victim of a swindler."

His words made no impression on the politician, who was fully satisfied in his own mind that his nephew was guilty of the crime of muleting the \$2,000 by means of the forged check.

Having said all he could say in his own defense Dave turned and left the library, going upstairs to his own room, where he sat down and reflected bitterly on his unhappy position.

Having been ordered to quit the house, there was nothing for him to do but obey his uncle's command and go, no matter how harsh and unfairly he felt that he was being treated.

What troubled him most was the thought of leaving under a cloud.

He had very little money and did not know where to go. Suddenly he recalled an invitation extended to him by a schoolmate who lived in the upper part of the Bronx.

He decided to go there, pass the night and decide on his future movements.

He would have to go to work to support himself.

That was certain.

His uncle had withdrawn his patronage and literally driven him out into the world to seek his own living.

"Yes," he muttered, "he has driven me to work. Well, so be it. I shall be under less compliment to him. I will make my own way in the world. I have a good education, for which I shall ever be grateful to my uncle. A college course isn't essential to a person's success in this world. Many of our brightest and most successful men—men who have worked their way up to the most important positions in the land—even to the presidency of this country—were not favored with college educations. I have health, ambition and pluck. That is capital enough with which to face the world, in connection with my general fund of knowledge. Maybe my uncle will learn he has been too hasty in condemning me. I hope he will, that my reputation may be redeemed. Otherwise I care little. I have accepted the last favor from him. Once I leave this house I shall have cut loose from him forever. The wound he

has inflicted can only be healed by a complete retraction on his part of the false charge he has brought against me. That will probably never happen."

Getting up with a new and resolute light in his eyes, Dave proceeded to pack up all his belongings.

While he was thus engaged the bell rang for dinner. The boy heard it with a bitter smile.

"I shall dine tonight in a restaurant," he soliloquized, as he stuffed his treasures and other property into his trunk; "and for some time henceforth, too," he added, "but they will not be restaurants such as I am accustomed to. Beggars can't be choosers. Some day, however, I may have as good a home as my uncle's—won by my own industry and talents. I would give something to learn who the rascal is who selected me to help him work off that forged check. He must be a clever scoundrel to be able to imitate my uncle's handwriting so well. He could not have done it without having had an autograph letter of Mr. Dent's to practice with, so it is clear that he knows my uncle, and probably had the scheme in preparation some time. I think I shall know the alleged Mr. Austin again if I ever meet him. Whether he was the man, or an accomplice, is a question which may never be brought to light."

Dave completed the packing of his trunk and his grip.

The latter he intended to take with him—the former he would send for when he had found a definite lodging.

His uncle, cousin and Gideon Wells were at dinner, and the front of the house was silent when he walked downstairs.

He was glad that he was not likely to meet any one connected with the place, for such an encounter would prove embarrassing to him.

Opening the hall door he stepped out on the stoop and shut it carefully behind him.

Tripping down the steps he turned his face toward Forty-second Street.

Two minutes later he was out of sight.

An hour later Herbert Dent and Gideon Wells left the house together.

With 1,200 in their possession they were bound for the home of Silas Hale, the money lender, in the upper Bronx.

They expected to have no trouble in adjusting matters with the usurer.

They didn't know the old fellow, however.

His nature was an implacable one when aroused, and he never forgave an injury when he believed it was deliberately inflicted.

He was not a miser in his love for money; but he was a miser in his thirst for retaliation.

In the latter respect he was a veritable Shylock—he would have his pound of flesh at any cost.

A disagreeable surprise, therefore, was awaiting Herbert Dent and his scheming associate, but they had not the slightest suspicion of the fact.

Unknown to either the elevated train that bore them northward to Tremont also carried Dave Darnley.

Dave was in the car ahead, and did not dream that his cousin and his college mate were so near him.

The presence of the three in the Bronx that night had a powerful influence on their futures.

They all got out at the Tremont station, which at that time was the terminus of the elevated road, and walked down the stairs in the crowd without Herbert and Wells seeing Dave or Dave noticing them.

The three started off in the same direction, though not along the same street.

It was half-past nine when Dave reached the home of his school friend, only to learn to his disappointment that that young fellow had gone out of town that day to spend a couple of weeks with his grandmother in the country.

"I must return the way I came and hunt up a cheap hotel for the night," said Dave, when he stood once more on the sidewalk.

The night was dark and lowering, and the gas lamps few and dim in that vicinity.

It is not surprising, then, if the boy, unfamiliar as he was with the locality, made a wrong turn, and walked out of his right course to the station.

He soon found himself in a block that he was sure he had not traversed on his way to his friend's house.

There were only a few houses on either side, and these were widely scattered.

All of them were dark and silent as though the occupants had retired to rest for the night, although the hour could not be called late.

"I guess I've lost my bearings," thought Dave, as he stopped in front of an old, rambling red brick house, with odd corners and gables, all overgrown with English ivy.

This house was one of the old-time buildings of the Bronx, built probably all of fifty years since, before the streets were cut through in that locality to any great extent.

The original occupants were long since dead and buried and their bones crumbled to dust; and their heirs had moved to more settled surroundings and disposed of the property for a tithe of what the ground was worth now, or would be worth in a few years.

A brick garden wall, crumbling in places, surrounded the house, or at least seemed to as far as Dave could make out in the dark.

There was a great iron double gate in the center of the front wall that looked as if it never was used; and close to it a stout wooden door, with a bell handle in one of the posts.

As Dave stood close to this door, debating whether he should retrace his steps or go on to the next corner and turn in the direction he imagined the station stood, the door in question was flung open and two persons, both young, darted out with headlong speed.

Their appearance was so sudden and unexpected that Dave could not get out of their way in time to avoid a collision with them.

He was bowled over on the sidewalk with considerable force, and one of the persons, the younger one, went sprawling over him.

He uttered an exclamation of terror in a tone that sounded familiar to Dave's ears, but his companion choked him off with an imprecation, pulled him on his feet and half dragged, half forced him up the street on a run.

They disappeared in the darkness as Dave pulled himself together and looked after them.

At that moment one of the upper windows in the house was thrown up and a succession of wild shrieks, in a girlish tone, sounded thrillingly on the night air.

CHAPTER VI.

SHOT DOWN.

When Herbert Dent and Gideon Wells left the station they headed for the home of the money lender, the location of which Wells seemed to be acquainted with, for though the night was dark and it was next to impossible to make out the numbers on the houses along their route—indeed most of them did not seem to have a number, or at least so displayed that it could be seen—they made their way along at a rapid pace, and with no sign of hesitation.

After making two or three turns they halted at length before the closed door in the garden wall that surrounded the old brick house we have already described.

Wells pulled the bell, which rang out with a loud clang.

For some minutes all was silent and still, and then steps were heard on the gravel walk coming toward the door.

"Who's there?" asked the voice of Silas Hale.

"Gideon Wells and Herbert Dent," responded Wells.

The money lender made no reply, but unbolted the gate and admitted his visitors.

"I see you are here," he said, grimly, as he rebolted the door. "I thought I'd bring you to the mark. Follow me."

He led the way up the walk to a side door and ushered them into the house.

A narrow entry took them into a wide, dimly lighted hallway, which, as it was uncarpeted, echoed their footfalls and the sounds reverberated through the silent house.

At the foot of a wide, bare flight of stairs they saw a full-length suit of steel armor, with helmet complete, standing like a knight of old on guard.

At the turn, or landing of the flight, stood a similar figure, rather rusty, with one of its mailed fists supported by a heavy sword.

There was a grilled window, of small different-colored glass, at the back of this landing to furnish light, and above it was suspended a tarnished dragoon's cuirass.

Evidently Silas Hale was either a collector of antiques or he had taken these and other articles of a similar nature, in settlement of loans.

The money lender showed his visitors into a big front room that was furnished in a substantial, but business-like way.

A roll-top desk of solid mahogany stood close to one of the windows.

There was a book case holding many volumes against one of the walls, and there was an old-fashioned marble top table with carved legs, in the center of the room.

Several modern chairs stood about at random, and Hale motioned his callers to take possession of two near the desk.

Hale pulled open the door of his strong safe and took therefrom an envelope.

Seating himself he pulled out of it a number of papers, pinned together, and laid them on the desk.

"Now to business," he said. "You have brought the

money, of course," and he held out his hand toward Herbert, who sat nearest him.

"I have brought all I could scrape together—\$1,200—I presume that will satisfy you for the present. The balance I will pay later. You can give me the indorsed note, and as many of the unsecured I O Us as you are willing to give up," replied Herbert, taking a roll of bills from his pocket.

The usurer smiled grimly.

"I think I told you that I expected you to bring the full sum before midnight or something unpleasant would happen tomorrow," he said coldly and deliberately.

"I know you did," replied Herbert, somewhat taken aback, "but as \$1,200 is more than I actually owe you, in fact, almost twice as much as I ever received from you, I thought——"

"It is evident that you don't know me, young man," interrupted the money lender. "Your friend, Gideon Wells, ought to have made your position clear to you as he—but that is neither here nor there. Go back and get the balance. I will give you till eight in the morning to find the other \$400."

"Isn't \$1,200 enough for the present?" faltered Herbert.

"No, it isn't," replied Silas Hale, in a decisive tone. Herbert looked helplessly at the usurer.

"I think you ought to be satisfied with that," he blurted.

"Young man, I do my own thinking. I'll give you till eight in the morning. If by that hour you, or your representative, are not here with the money, I shall call on your father and place these documents in his hands with the request that he settle them for you."

"If you do that you will lose by it. You will only get the actual amount represented by the note and I O Us," said Herbert, in a shaky tone.

"And what will you get afterward, young man? And what will happen to the obliging individual who forged your father's signature on the back of the ninety-day note? I mention no names, but I fancy I know who he is," and the money lender chuckled in a cold-blooded way.

At those words Gideon Wells gave a slight start, and his eyes narrowed in a way that would have told the usurer, had he known him intimately, that he was in a dangerous mood.

"It is impossible for me to raise the other \$400 within so short a time," replied Herbert, desperately.

"Very well; that settles it, and we need say no more on the subject," said Silas Hale, returning the papers to the envelope and getting up to place the latter back in the safe.

Then it was that Wells, who had taken no part in the discussion so far, got up and laid his hand on the money lender's arm.

"Mr. Hale," he said in a tense voice, "we came here to get that promissory note in particular, and we must have it. You are offered \$1,200. Keep the I O Us as security for the \$400 you demand and let us have the note in question."

"You seem to be interested in that note, Mr. Wells," replied Hale, dryly.

"I am."

"On account of the forged indorsement, I suppose," with a chuckle.

"No matter about the reason. That note I—we must have now."

"You can have it if you produce the \$1,600."

"We will have it for the \$1,200—understand?"

"You threaten me?" cried the usurer, reaching for the safe and flashing out a revolver. "Take your hands off me."

Wells looked into the muzzle of the weapon and never turned a hair.

A cooler chap never stood in shoe leather, and his nerve disconcerted the old man.

"Well, why don't you shoot?" asked Wells, calmly. "Is it because you failed to have it ready cocked this time?"

The usurer, taken off his guard, removed his eyes from the young man's face and glanced at his weapon which he held with bent arm within two inches of Wells' heart.

That move was fatal to him.

The revolver was cocked, as he always kept it ready for business, but Wells had hazarded a sharp trick and it went.

Like a flash he seized the usurer's arm and bent it away intending to disarm the old man.

He bent it a little too far, and the sharpness of the action caused Hale's finger to press on the trigger.

There was a flash, a whip-like report, and the money lender, with a cry, wheeled convulsively and fell like a log on the carpeted floor before the safe.

There he lay perfectly still while his face assumed in a moment a ghastly look.

Herbert sprang to his feet with a cry of dismay, and gazed with staring eyes at the corpse.

"My heavens! I've killed him!" exclaimed Wells, aghast at the unintentional tragedy.

The room had been dimly lighted by the lamp which stood on the usurer's desk.

It was now suddenly illuminated from a trap above.

Wells gazed up in a startled way and saw a terrified face—the face of a young and beautiful girl—framed in the lighted opening.

Before he could make a move the girl seemed to realize the situation below, and uttered a terrible cry.

"My uncle! oh, my uncle! You have killed him, villains! Help, help, help!"

Her screams awoke Wells to the exigency of the moment.

He had the nerve, however, to reach for the envelope jutched in the hand of the dead man.

It contained the paper that meant so much to him.

He tore it away, but in his haste failed to notice that one paper remained in the old man's fingers.

As he rose with the torn envelope in his grasp the corpse seemed to glare at him with a triumphant, sarcastic expression.

The young man's blood ran cold and he shuddered involuntarily.

He rushed over to the terrified Herbert.

"Come," he said, almost fiercely, "we must get out of here at once. Should we be caught on the premises it would be fatal to us both. Come—get a move on you."

He dragged the boy to the door, down the stairs, and out into the night air, while the screams of the girl rang in both their ears.

CHAPTER VII.

TWO YOUNG HEARTS.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Dave. "Something is wrong!"

The door in the wall had not been closed by Wells and Herbert when they rushed out, and Dave looked inside and up at the window where the girl was screaming.

Then he made his way inside and shouted out:

"What's the trouble, miss?"

"Oh, come in the house, please do. My uncle has been shot by two men, and I fear he is dead."

"Your uncle shot by two men!" he cried, much startled. "Those chaps who knocked me over in their haste to get away must be the ones who did it," he thought. "I'll come right in, miss," he added to the girl.

With his grip in his hand he walked up to the front door, but found it fast.

"I can't get in here. I must try the back door," he said.

On his way around the house he saw the side door standing open.

"I can get in here all right," and he entered the house. He made his way into the hall and was surprised to see the effigy in armor at the foot of the stairs.

Passing it he sprang up the flight, and was met by the girl, holding a lamp above her head, evidently waiting for him.

She was attired in a loose pink wrapper that fitted her well.

Her hair was disordered and her eyes were streaming with tears, while the rise and fall of her bosom showed how excited and agitated she was.

One glance at her lovely face and Dave recognized her as Elise Preston, the girl he had saved from being run over by the cab on Forty-second Street.

"Miss Preston!" he exclaimed, in a tone of great surprise.

At the mention of her name she bent an earnest look on his face, and then she knew him.

"Mr. Darnley!" she cried, a look of pleasure momentarily leaping into her eyes.

"Yes. I am sorry to find you in trouble. Where is your uncle?"

"In that room," she said, pointing with a shaking finger to a half open door through which came a dim light.

"I will go in first. It would be a bad shock for you to see him if he is dead."

"My poor uncle!" sobbed the girl. "I will go with you. I could not go alone. I—I must know the worst."

She looked appealingly into Dave's face.

"Let me take the lamp," he said, dropping his grip on a settee outside the door which had been placed there for visitors.

Then together they entered the room where the tragedy had happened.

There in front of the safe lay Silas Hale, just as he had fallen.

It needed but a glance to convince both Dave and the girl that he was dead.

With a cry of intense grief Elise fell on her knees beside him.

"Oh, Uncle Silas! Uncle Silas! what shall I do without you?" she sobbed.

Dave was much affected by her sorrow, as well as by the presence of death.

"Try to be calm, Miss Preston," he said, kneeling beside her and trying his best to comfort her. "I feel dead sorry for you."

"He was all I had in the world, and I was all he had."

"Did you live here alone with him?"

"We have a housekeeper, but she went away this afternoon to visit a sick sister in Brooklyn."

"There is no one else beside ourselves in the house, then?"

"No one, but my poor dead uncle," and she broke out weeping afresh.

"Did you see the persons who were in this room when your uncle was killed?"

"Yes, yes. I was in the room above when I heard the shot. There is a trap-door in the ceiling which my uncle sometimes used for reasons of his own. I rushed to it, threw it open and looked down."

"You would know the persons again if you ever saw them?"

"Yes, I am sure I would; particularly the one who looked up at me."

"You don't know which one did the shooting, I suppose?"

"I am sure it was the young man who stood near the safe. The other was a boy of about your age."

"I see your uncle has a revolver in his hand. It is clear he tried to defend himself."

"He always kept a loaded pistol in the safe, and another in one of the drawers of his desk. He was always on his guard against those who called to see him."

"The police ought to be notified with as little delay as possible."

"There is a telephone in that corner. Look up some police station in the Bronx and send in word that my uncle has been murdered."

Dave took a paper out of the stiffening hand of the dead man.

He did not attempt to examine it, but laid it on the usurer's desk as he passed.

Five minutes later he was in communication with the police.

"We had better leave the room and everything as it is," he said on returning to Elise. "The police may be able to find some clue to the young chaps who are implicated in this crime. I forgot to tell you that they ran into me at the gate and knocked me down in their hurry to get away. After I got up I heard you scream from the window."

He led the girl from the room of death, and they seated themselves on the settee outside, to wait for the coming of the police.

He led the talk away from their gruesome surroundings, back to the moment when he saw her first, and told her he had often thought of her, and wondered if he would ever see her again.

"I never dreamed, though, under what circumstances we would come together again," he said.

Elise admitted that she had often thought of him, too, and that her surprise was great when she recognized him as the one who had entered the house in reply to her cries for help.

Then Dave told her how it happened he was up in that part of the Bronx that night.

In fact, he told her all about the unfortunate predicament he was in.

"I am as innocent as a baby of the charge my uncle brought against me," he said. "It is most unfortunate that I should have lost that note which I believed came from him. By acting on the request it contained I put myself in the false position I am now in. My uncle is always unreasonable or implacable when he is intensely angry. He really believes I am guilty, and it is a question whether circumstances will ever arise to convince him to the contrary. Now you see the fix I'm in."

Elise expressed the deepest sympathy for Dave in his own trouble, and said she hoped it would come out all right in the end.

Then she referred to her own friendless position and broke out crying afresh.

"You shall never want a friend as long as I live, Miss Preston," he said, earnestly. "May we not be a friend to each other? I have nobody now since my uncle has gone back on me. As you are in the same plight, why will you not be as a sister to me, and let me surround you with a brother's protection?"

He took her hands in his as he spoke.

"You are so good to make such an offer, Mr. Darnley," she said, looking gratefully at him. "Shall I ever forget that you saved my life? I shall be glad to have your friendship and protection if you really wish to extend it to me, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

"Then let it be as I have suggested, Elise—you will let me call you that now. And you must call me Dave. I swear to be a brother to you from this moment, and I will protect you, even at the risk of my life, if that is necessary."

She smiled at him through her wet lashes, and flashed upon him a look of confidence that hid, perhaps, a deeper feeling, and he responded with a look that thrilled her to the very soul.

And after that their conversation assumed a most confidential tone as they realized that each had a fresh interest in the other, an interest that was destined to ripen into a warmer attachment as time went on.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DETECTIVE FINDS A CLUE.

Dave and Elise were brought back to the realization of their surroundings by a sharp ring at the front doorbell.

They went to the door together.

Outside stood three policemen and a detective in plain clothes.

Elise explained that they were the only ones in the house.

"I am Elise Preston, Mr. Hale's niece. I have lived with him for several years. This young man is David Darnley, who came here in answer to my screams at the time of the murder, and he has remained with me since."

"Where do you live, young man?"

Dave knew it would look suspicious for him to say that he had no address at present, so he gave the number of his uncle's house.

"I am Mr. Dudley Dent's nephew," he said.

"The politician?" asked the officer.

"Yes."

That answer established the boy on a respectable basis, for Mr. Dent was a well-known public man, and a power in the political world.

Still the detective wanted to know what had brought Dave up into the Bronx.

"I came up to visit a schoolmate named Dick Smith, who lives at No. —— Blank Street. I brought my grip for I expected to stay with him tonight. I was much disappointed to find that he had just gone out of town. In trying to find my way back to the elevated station I got mixed up and wandered into this street just at the time when Miss Preston's cries attracted my attention."

His explanation was considered satisfactory.

"Where was the crime committed?" the detective next asked.

"In the large front room on the floor above. We will take you there," said the boy.

"Was the man dead when you saw him?"

"He was."

"You didn't touch anything, I hope?"

"I removed a paper from his fingers and placed it on his desk, that was all."

"You shouldn't have done that. You might have destroyed an important clue. However, as long as the paper is on his desk where I can get it there is probably no harm done."

The party then started upstairs.

"Ha!" exclaimed the sleuth, viewing the body. "He has a revolver in his hand. About to protect himself when he was shot."

With some difficulty he got the weapon out of the dead man's hand.

"One of the chambers has been discharged," he remarked, examining the revolver. "Where were you when the tragedy occurred?" he said, turning to Elise.

"In the room above."

"How many shots did you hear?"

"One."

"Are you sure?"

"I am," replied the girl, positively.

"How do you know this is a murder? Your uncle may have killed himself."

"He would not do such a thing," she cried, earnestly. "There was a young man and a boy of perhaps nineteen in the room with him. The moment I heard the shot I

was alarmed. I jumped up, opened the trap-door in the ceiling and looked down."

"A trap-door in the ceiling, eh?" ejaculated the detective, looking up and noting the opening which Elise had not closed. "What purpose was it used for?"

"My uncle had it made in order to look down into the room at times."

"For what purpose?"

"He had his reasons, which he never confided to me."

"Go on—tell me what you saw."

Elise told him in a few words.

"You would be able to identify these two persons if they were lined up before you in company with others, would you?"

"I would."

"Good. Describe them."

She did so as well as she could remember.

There was nothing in her description that would not fit almost any well-dressed young man and boy between eighteen and twenty-five years of age.

The detective realized that he must have a more definite clue in order to make an arrest.

He walked over to the desk and picked up a torn and rumpled paper that lay upon it.

"Is this the paper you took from the dead man's fingers?" he asked Dave.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy.

The sleuth examined it.

He saw it was a promissory note for \$500 signed by Herbert Dent.

Turning it over he saw it was indorsed by Dudley Dent.

This was evidently an interesting and important discovery.

"Young man," he said, turning to Dave, "do you know a person named Herbert Dent?"

"Why, yes," replied Dave, in surprise. "He is my cousin—the son of Dudley Dent, my uncle."

"How old is he?"

"Nineteen."

"Was he home when you left the house tonight?"

"He was. Why do you ask?" asked Dave, with curious interest.

"Nothing in particular," replied the sleuth, putting the paper in his pocket. "Does he go out much nights?"

"Every night, I believe—so do I."

"With him?" asked the officer, quickly.

"No, we are not very chummy."

"No? Don't pull, eh? By the way, has he any particular friend—one he goes with often?"

"I don't keep track of his friends. Just at present he has a college chum—a fine chap, about twenty-two—stopping at the house."

"Ah! Twenty-two, eh? What's his name?"

"Gideon Wells."

"What does he look like?"

Dave described Wells pretty accurately, and his description tallied well with Elise's.

The detective noted the fact, and it strengthened a suspicion he had formed since he examined the promissory note.

"Never noticed, I suppose, what time your cousin and Wells come in of nights?"

"I believe they don't come in till late. At any rate they were never in when I went to bed; but then I haven't been in the habit of staying out late."

"I dare say they are gay birds—frequent the theaters, cafes, and wind up with a supper, with invited guests, on Lobster Square. That's the way some of these college chaps, who have plenty of money, spend their vacations when they're in the city. I know them," and the detective chuckled.

It was about midnight now and Dave suggested to Elise the advisability of her going to bed.

"The police are in full charge of the house, and nothing can be done about your uncle's body until after the coroner has viewed it and issued a permit for burial," he said. "Go to your room and lock yourself in. I believe you sleep on the top floor."

"Yes. And you, won't you go to bed, too? There is a spare bedroom across the corridor from my room. You can use it just as well as not. I would feel more at ease if I knew you were in the house and close by," said Elise.

"Anything you say goes with me, Elise," replied Dave. "I promised to stand by you, and I will."

"Thank you—you are so good," she replied with a smile.

The detective had gone away, leaving a policeman on guard in the grounds and another in the house.

Dave, after telling the inside officer that he intended to remain there for the night, accompanied Elise to the top floor and took possession of the room she pointed out to him.

He slept like a top, and awoke to find the morning sunshine streaming in at his window.

He got up, went downstairs and found that the coroner had arrived and was viewing the corpse.

Later on Elise came down and prepared breakfast.

The two officers were invited to partake of it, and they accepted the invitation one at a time.

As Dave had nothing special on hand he was in no hurry to leave, and the girl was delighted to have him stay with her.

An undertaker was telephoned for and he sent an assistant to embalm the body of the money lender and measure him for a suitable casket.

Soon after lunch the housekeeper showed up, and was paralyzed to learn that Mr. Hale had been killed during her brief absence.

The morning newspapers printed a brief account of the tragedy, and during the morning several reporters called to secure added information for the afternoon editions.

It was hinted that the police had a clue to the two young men, one of whom was responsible for the money lender's death, and their arrest might be expected to follow.

Dave, at Elise's earnest request, decided to remain at the house until after the funeral, and he treated her in such a gentle and tender way, and did everything to comfort her, that her heart went right out to him.

The old man had provided himself with a plot in Woodlawn cemetery against the time when death was bound to

claim him, though he did not expect to die for many years, and so he was taken there and laid to rest, with his niece as chief mourner.

After their return from the funeral Dave asked the girl whether she knew if her uncle had made a will or not, and she said he had, and pointed out the place in the safe where he kept it with a letter of instructions to be followed in the event of his death.

They read the will together and it was found that, with the exception of a few small bequests to certain public institutions in which it appeared the late money lender had taken an unsuspected interest, all his property was left without reserve to his niece, his confidential attorney being named as executor and the girl's guardian till she came of age.

The letter of instructions was addressed jointly to the lawyer and Elise, and therefore they did not open it.

Elise expressed some surprise that the legal gentleman had not already called at the house.

"He ought to have been at the funeral, for he was a warm friend of my uncle's. I wish you would telephone him, Dave, and let him know what has happened, though surely he ought to have learned the particulars from the papers," she said.

As Dave started for the telephone there was a ring at the gate bell which was answered by the housekeeper, who presently ushered the lawyer into the room.

"My dear young lady," said the lawyer, whose name was Davenport, "allow me to sympathize with you in your bereavement, and also to express my regret at my inability to be present at the funeral of my late esteemed friend, Silas Hale. Business of importance took me to Boston a few days ago, and it was only this morning that I saw the account of this unfortunate tragedy in a New York paper. I immediately made hasty arrangements to come on, and took the first train I could connect with. I reached the Grand Central Station about an hour ago, and came right here."

After this explanation he took charge of things at the house.

Elise introduced Dave, and told the lawyer that he was a good friend of hers, who had been with her since the moment of her uncle's murder.

"Glad to make your acquaintance, my lad; and I thank you for your kindness to Miss Preston in her hour of trouble," said the lawyer.

Dave replied that he was only too happy to be of any service to the girl.

The lawyer, after putting the will in his pocket, read the letter of instructions to Elise and found that Mr. Hale directed that his money lending business be wound up with all reasonable dispatch.

He gave clear information which, in connection with his books, would enable the executor to carry out his wishes without any special trouble.

The lawyer locked the safe, after handing the girl a sum of money more than sufficient to cover immediate expenses, shut the desk and handed the key of the room to Elise, telling her to keep it locked.

He said he would be obliged to return to Boston by a late train, but she might expect to see him in a few days.

Then he went away.

"And now I'd better get a move on, too," said Dave.

"Why? Won't you stay with me a while longer?" Elise asked wistfully.

"I'd be glad to, but it is time I was up and doing. I'm out on the world now and must make my own living," replied Dave.

"But you can stay here with me as long as you care to," she replied. "I'd love to have your company. If you go away I shall be awfully lonesome."

Dave saw the tears come into her eyes and he put his arm around her waist.

"Then you really think a lot of me, Elise?" he said, tenderly.

"You know I do. You're the only real friend I have now."

"You forget Mr. Davenport, who will soon be your guardian."

"No, I don't; but he isn't just like you. You said you would be my brother."

"So I will, dear. And you will be my own sweet sister, won't you?"

"Yes," she replied softly.

That emboldened Dave to draw her blushing face to his and imprint several kisses on her lips.

She immediately hid her face on his shoulder.

After that they were like a pair of lovers, as indeed they were.

Dave told her that, happy as he would feel to remain with her, duty demanded that he get down to business.

"I've been driven to work, dear, and I'm not going to shrink from it," he said, resolutely. "I want you to feel proud of me, and I am sure you couldn't if I took advantage of your attachment for me to loaf around here and live at the expense of the estate. At present we are as brother and sister, but I mean to have you for my wife some day if you are willing. To be worthy of you I'll have to win a fortune that will in some way compare with your legacy. At present I'm worth nothing. I'm hardly worth the value of a shoe string. Therefore, if I win a fortune ultimately I'll be a living example of that old saying: 'A fortune from a shoe string.'"

"But it will take you a long time to make a fortune," she said.

"How long are you willing to wait for me?"

"As long as I live," she replied, impulsively.

"That's a long time," he smiled. "Then you will be my wife some day?"

"Yes, dear Dave, if you will have me," she replied, nestling close to him.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE LAW.

When Herbert Dent and Gideon Wells fled from the brick house in the Bronx after the tragedy they made their way to the elevated station as fast as they could go.

Herbert was so staggered by the shooting of the money lender, although he had taken no part in it, that he was

quite dazed, and Wells had to force him along to make him keep up.

"Brace up, can't you?" cried the young man, angrily.

"Heaven! we're in a terrible scrape," fluttered Herbert.

"Nonsense! No one will ever know that we had a hand in the old man's death."

"Don't bring me into it. I had no hand in it. You shot him."

"He shot himself. It was a pure accident. In turning his arm away so that he wouldn't shoot me the weapon went off, for Hale's finger was on the trigger and the ball went through his own heart."

"Nobody will believe that. They'll say you shot him, and I'll be in trouble because I was present. Heaven! what will my father say when he hears of it?"

"He won't hear about it. I tell you nobody will suspect us."

"Why won't they? That girl saw us through the trap."

"That won't make any difference. We can go out of town for a few weeks on a jaunt among the seashore resorts. We can stay till it's time for us to get back to Princeton. In this way we'll never be identified with the occurrence."

"What will we go on?"

"The twelve hundred, of course. We've got that. The old man was a fool not to accept it on account. Had he done so he'd be alive yet. The trouble with him was he wanted to revenge himself on you because of the forged indorsement."

"The police will find that note and my I O Us in his hand and then they'll suspect that we were there. We'll be arrested in the morning, sure," groaned Herbert.

"No, we won't be arrested. I snatched the papers out of his hand, minus the envelope, which amounts to nothing. I knew the danger of leaving them behind us to give the detectives a clue."

"Did you get them all?"

"Every one. Now you won't have to pay any of them, so you're that much ahead."

That reflection did more to brace Herbert up than anything else.

The I O Us, and particularly the promissory note, had been a nightmare to him, and the idea of being obliged to pay \$1,600 for them had almost broken his heart.

Now, according to his companion's statement, the truth of which he did not doubt, he was clear of the whole business, and he and Wells could use the \$1,200 to have a good time with.

To encourage his companion by proving to him that he had nothing more to fear from the various promises to pay Wells stopped under a gas lamp near the station.

"I'll show them to you," he said, "and then we'll destroy them when we get to your house."

He hauled the bunch of papers out of his pocket.

"There's one of your I O Us for fifty dollars," he said. "There's another for a hundred, and there's a third for another hundred."

"Where's the promissory note?" asked Herbert, when the last of the I O Us had been accounted for. "That's the most important of all."

"In my pocket," said Wells, searching for it. But it wasn't, as the reader knows. Wells went through all his pockets but without result. "You haven't got it," said Herbert. "You got all but that, and that paper will put the police on our track."

Wells knitted his brows and reflected.

"It may have dropped out of my pocket along the route," he said.

"How could it? I am sure you missed that one, and the police will find it."

"Well, it can't be helped," replied the young man, coolly. "It will only be a bit of circumstantial evidence against us at the worst. No one saw the old man shot. It can be easily shown that the revolver was his own, and it will be found clutched in his hand. If we should be arrested for this thing we must swear that he committed suicide. Who can say that he didn't?"

"It won't look reasonable."

"Reasonable or not we will swear it is what actually happened. I will make out a story that we're to stick to in case we are brought to book, and you must corroborate me. Understand?"

"Yes."

"You ought to know it was an accident any way. You were looking on."

"Why can't we tell the truth and say it was an accident?"

"Because we should be held pending a long investigation, probably without bail, and there's no reason why we should chance that when the suicide scheme strikes me as being simpler."

"Well, have it your own way. You're older than I, and I guess you can manage things somehow. I'll swear to any story you tell."

"That's right. On the whole I think it would be well for us to get out of town till this thing blows over. We can have a good time away from the city, and I dare say we'll make our funds go further. The Tenderloin is a bit too strenuous for our resources. We've parted with \$100 in a night there. We must go a bit slower."

"I'm willing to go anywhere you say."

"You can tell your governor first thing in the morning that I've received word to go home and that I've invited you to go with me. Then you can ask him for a few dollars for general expenses. He'll cough that up without question. Then we'll take an early train for—well, we'll decide on that later."

Having settled the matter for the time being they took a train down to Manhattan, and an hour later were in the house.

Neither slept much that night, for there was no telling but that a detective might pay them a visit at any moment.

Nothing like that happened, however, up to breakfast time, when they met Mr. Dent at the table.

He looked hard at his son, and remarked that he was keeping late hours.

Herbert admitted it, and then said that he had decided to get out of town and take a rest if his father was willing.

"Gid found a telegram at the Princeton Club last night

telling him to come home right away to sign some legal papers connected with the estate. He has invited me to go with him and spend the rest of my vacation at his place. May I?"

"I have no objection," replied the politician, "if Mr. Wells would like to have your company."

"I should enjoy it very much indeed, sir," spoke up Wells, suavely.

"Very well. You may go, Herbert. Come into the library and I will give you some money for your expenses, and also your next allowance, which will be due in a few days."

A look of satisfaction shone in Herbert's eyes as he followed his father out of the dining-room.

His father handed him \$200, and he joined Wells upstairs at once.

Both had taken time by the forelock and packed their grips ready to start.

In a few minutes they came downstairs prepared to leave.

"Going already?" exclaimed Mr. Dent in surprise.

"Yes, sir. Gid wants to take an early train," replied Herbert.

"By the way, I forgot to ask you where you live, Mr. Wells," said the politician.

"Our place is known as Great Oak Manor. It's on the eastern shore of Maryland, about thirty miles from Baltimore, across the Chesapeake," replied Wells, glibly.

Mr. Dent made a note of it and put the memorandum in his desk for future reference.

Then he wished his son and the visitor good-by, expressing the pleasure he had enjoyed of making Wells' acquaintance; hoped he would see him again, and told Herbert to write to him soon.

Herbert promised that he would, and then he and Wells hurried from the house.

They bent their steps to the Grand Central Station, where they intended to take the 10:10 limited for Boston, en route for Bar Harbor, down in Maine.

About the time they passed through the gate at the station a sharp-featured man ran up the steps of the Dent mansion on Madison Avenue and rang the bell.

"Is Herbert Dent in?" he inquired of the servant who answered the ring.

"No, sir. He and his college friend, who has been stopping here with him since their vacation began, left about an hour ago for some place out of town."

The caller looked annoyed and disappointed.

"Gone out of town, eh?" he said. "Rather sudden, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir," replied the servant.

"Couldn't give me any idea of where they went, eh?"

"No, sir, but I guess Mr. Dent could tell you."

"Is he in?"

"No, sir. He went out fifteen minutes ago."

"Know where I could find him?"

"No, sir. I haven't any idea where he went. You might find him at the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

At the time of which I write the Fifth Avenue Hotel was the stamping ground for all the big politicians.

It has since been pulled down and a business edifice erected on its site.

The caller thought it likely that Mr. Dent would be there and he started for Madison Square.

"Their sudden departure from the city confirms my suspicions," muttered the man, who was the sleuth who had called at the red brick house in the Bronx the night before with the policeman, in answer to Dave Darnley's telephone call; "and I am now sure of the identity of the two young fellows who were present when Hale was shot dead. One of them evidently did the deed, and circumstances indicate that it was young Dent, for he is the chap who was largely in the usurer's debt. These fast young sparks prove dangerous customers sometimes when driven into a corner. Evidently Hale wanted his money, and probably threatened trouble if he didn't get it, and young Dent, being unable to pay, shot the money lender with his own weapon in a moment of desperation. Doubtless, in order to hide his guilt, he placed the weapon in the old man's fingers, to give the deed the color of suicide. That dodge has been tried before more than once. I'm thinking this is going to be a great shock to Dudley Dent. It will take more of a political pull than he has to save his son from the consequences of his rashness."

The detective got off the car at Broadway and Twenty-third Street and crossed over to the hotel.

To his satisfaction he found Mr. Dent in the "Amen Corner" conversing with the political boss of his party.

Excusing himself for the interruption he said he had heard that his son had just left town.

"I wish to communicate with him on a matter of importance," continued the sleuth, suavely, without revealing his identity or calling. "Can you tell me where a letter will reach him?"

"I can," replied the politician. "He is going to spend the rest of the summer with his college friend, Gideon Wells, at that young man's home on the eastern shore of Maryland, about thirty miles from Baltimore across the Chesapeake Bay. The place is called Great Oak Manor, and I believe the postoffice address is Fairlee."

"Thank you, Mr. Dent. You have placed me under great obligations. Good-day," and the detective hurried from the hotel.

He made his way to a nearby railroad office, which happened to be the Baltimore & Ohio road, and inquired what route a person would be likely to take to reach the eastern shore of Maryland by all-rail.

"There are several," replied the agent, "of which our line is one. You would have to change at Wilmington and subsequently at either Townsend or Clayton. What part of the eastern shore do you want to reach?"

The sleuth said he wanted to get to the neighborhood of a place called Fairlee.

The agent looked the place up.

"You would have to go to Chestertown unless you could get somebody to meet you at Worton Station, three miles this side of the end of the route. You would make your change at Townsend," said the agent.

After inquiring the price of a ticket to Chestertown the detective left and made his way to police headquarters.

An hour later he boarded an express on the Pennsylvania road en route for Wilmington, quite unconscious that he was following an unprofitable scent.

CHAPTER X.

DAVE GOES ON THE ROAD.

Dave Darnley, having made up his mind to go to work without delay, proceeded to carry his purpose out.

Elise wanted to lend him \$50 to help him along, but he refused to accept it.

"I've got funds enough, I guess, to see me through," he said. "If I should run short I'll let you know."

"You'll call and see me often, won't you?" she said.

"If I catch on in Manhattan I will; but I saw an advertisement in this morning's paper that I thought of answering in person. A book publishing concern in Broadway wants a well-educated young fellow to travel in the New England States, on a salary, and I think such a job would just suit me," said Dave.

"But I wouldn't see you then for some time," said Elise with a pout.

"Don't do that again or I'll kiss you," laughed the boy. "We could write to each other often, couldn't we?"

"Of course; but that isn't as satisfactory as seeing each other."

"That's true; but a fellow has to sacrifice his inclinations when necessity rules the roost. When I return from the trip our meetings will be all the sweeter. I mustn't count my chickens before they're hatched, though. I haven't got the job yet, and I'm afraid the chances are I won't get it, for I dare say there will be a bunch after it."

It occurred to him that the firm would require references, and he wondered who he could refer to.

Elise suggested her prospective guardian, the lawyer.

"But he's in Boston," said Dave.

"You can give his name, anyway."

Dave decided that he would, and soon afterward, leaving his grip at the house, for he intended to return, he started for Manhattan.

He found a room full of applicants for the job at the publishing house, but nothing daunted, he sat down to wait his turn for an interview.

In the course of half an hour he entered the manager's office.

He answered all questions frankly, put up a good game of talk, and submitted Lawyer Davenport as his reference.

It happened that the manager was personally acquainted with the legal gentleman, and so Dave's chances rose.

"Living with your parents?" asked the manager, at length.

"No, sir. They are dead. I have been living with my uncle, Dudley Dent——"

"You mean the Hon. Dudley Dent?"

"Yes, sir. I am stopping now up in the Bronx with a friend."

"How long since you left school?"

"I graduated about three weeks ago from the Blankville Academy, and was selected to deliver the valedictory address."

"Indeed," said the manager. "Well, that is all. I think you may expect to hear from me in a day or two. Give me your address, please."

Dave did so, and the interview terminated.

After leaving the publishing house Dave went uptown and called on several of his friends.

He said nothing about his having been driven from his uncle's home, and so they got no inkling of his change of fortune.

Late in the afternoon he returned to the red house and spent the evening with Elise, telling her that he had had a very satisfactory interview with the manager of the publishing house, but could not say whether he would get the job or not.

On the morning of the second day thereafter a letter was delivered by the postman addressed to him.

It bore the imprint of the publishing company.

In a few brief lines he was requested to call at once.

"Looks as if I had caught on," he said to Elise, showing her the communication.

He put on his hat and took the train downtown.

Reaching the publishing house he was shown into the manager's office.

"We have decided to give you a trial, Mr. Darnley," said the manager.

"Glad to hear it," replied Dave, in a tone of satisfaction.

"I will introduce you to Mr. Dunne, the head of our subscription book department, and he will instruct you in the line of work you are to handle for us. You will have to report here daily until we are ready to send you out."

Dave was then turned over to Mr. Dunne, and that gentleman took him in hand.

It took several days to break him into the business, and then he was told that he was to start out on Monday morning for Springfield, Mass.

Monday morning came, and after a tender parting from Elise, who cried quite a bit at losing him, he left the house, grip in hand.

His trunk, which he had sent for several days before, he left in the girl's care, and three hours later he was aboard a train pulling out of the Grand Central Station.

In due time he reached Springfield, and began his career as a canvasser of high-class subscription books.

We will not follow him through the early stage of his new field of action.

He soon found that the business was not a path of roses, but hard work.

However, he did not get discouraged when he got his bumps.

He had been driven to work and he determined to face the music like a man.

He had his days of hard luck as well as his fortunate ones, and in the long run the balance was greatly in his favor.

At any rate his efforts were considered on the whole satisfactory to his employers, and the letters he received from Mr. Dunne encouraged him to keep on trying to do a little better each week.

After visiting the larger places of central and eastern

Massachusetts he was directed to proceed to the big towns in Maine.

By that time he had been away from New York two months, and summer was practically over.

Several things had happened in the meanwhile which would have interested him greatly had they come to his knowledge.

The day that Dave started out on the road to learn the meaning of the word work, a servant, while cleaning out the closet of the room that had been occupied by Gideon Wells at the Dent mansion, discovered on the floor an opened letter addressed to "David Darnley."

She took the letter to Mr. Dent, who happened to be in his library at the time.

He took out the enclosure and read it.

The text of the note astonished him beyond measure, for it was the communication which the man who said his name was Austin, and that he was the treasurer of the Calumet Club, had handed to Dave in front of the house.

This was the missing note which the boy had told his uncle contained the instructions directing him to cash the \$2,000 check and hand the money to Austin.

It also contained Austin's receipt for the money, the wording of which was in Dave's own handwriting.

Mr. Dent looked long and hard at the note.

"I never wrote that," he said, "but somebody did who is a wizard at imitating my writing as well as my signature. I gave the boy the discredit of forging my signature to the check, and I did not believe his statement about the note he claimed to have received from me. He could not produce it, which was enough to brand him as a liar in my estimation. Now here is the very note come to light. Did my nephew tell the truth after all, or is this some of his work—a link in his scheme that failed him at the crucial moment? If he told the truth and was the victim of some designing schemer, then I have acted most unjustly toward him, and it is up to me to make the amende honorable. But how is the fact to be established?"

He sent for the upstairs girl who had handed him the note.

"Where did you get this letter, Mary?" he asked her.

"I found it lying in a corner of the closet of the front room on the third floor—the one lately vacated by Mr. Herbert's friend," replied the domestic.

"That was all you found in the room in the shape of writing, I suppose?"

"I found some torn pieces of paper in one of the dresser drawers with writing on, sir. I am going to throw them out."

"Bring them to me, please."

The girl went upstairs and presently returned with a handful of scraps which she laid on Mr. Dent's desk.

As soon as the girl had withdrawn the politician examined the bits of paper.

He pieced many of them together, and the result rather startled him.

They showed that somebody had been practicing not only his signature but his handwriting in general.

He wrinkled his brow in thought.

A week had passed since his son and Gideon Wells went away, and he had received no word from Herbert.

Mr. Dent keenly felt his son's negligence in not apprising him of his arrival at his friend's home.

Fearing that his son might have been suddenly taken ill he had sent a telegram to Herbert that morning addressed care of Gideon Wells, Great Oak Manor, via Fairlee, Maryland.

While he was puzzling over the scraps of paper containing imitations of his handwriting the bell rang and the servant brought him a telegram, charges collect.

This is what he read:

"Dudley Dent, New York City:

"Your telegram addressed Herbert Dent, Great Oak Manor, inadvertently opened. No such persons as Dent or Wells here or known to undersigned.

"WILLIAM GAY,
Great Oak Maner, County Kent, Md."

The contents of the telegram rather staggered Mr. Dent.

Gideon Wells had distinctly told him that Great Oak Manor was his family estate, where he and his sister lived when at home, and where their parents had lived for years, and yet the sender of this telegram declared that no person by the name of Wells was known there.

He pulled the memorandum of the address given him by Wells out of a pigeon hole and looked at it, to make sure he had made no mistake in addressing his telegram.

"I don't understand this at all," he said, in a puzzled tone. "I must send a telegram to this man Gay, requesting a fuller explanation. It must be that there are two places down there with similar names."

At that moment the doorbell rang again and the servant announced a visitor.

Mr. Dent gathered up the scraps of paper and laid them in a drawer, and told the servant to show the caller into the library.

It was the detective.

He had returned that morning from a fruitless search throughout the eastern shore of Maryland, which had taken him several days, satisfied that the young men he was looking for had never gone to that part of the country.

"Sorry to bother you, Mr. Dent," said the sleuth, helping himself to a seat, "but my business is important."

"I will listen to you, sir," said the politician, who was accustomed to have visits from strangers.

"You will perhaps remember my face. I called upon you at the Fifth Avenue hotel a few mornings ago and asked you for your son's address."

"I recall now that you did."

"You told me that he went to spend the rest of the summer with his college friend, Gideon Wells, at a place called Great Oak Manor, near Fairlee, on the eastern shore of Maryland."

"I did. That was the address Mr. Wells gave me just before he and my son left the house that morning. He gave me to understand that it was his home."

"If he did, he told you what wasn't the truth," replied the sleuth, bluntly. "Great Oak Manor is the name of

an extensive farm, the property of William Gay, who has lived there all of twenty years. No family by the name of Wells lives anywhere in that neighborhood, nor, I may say, in any part of Kent County, according to the records at the courthouse in Chestertown, which is the county seat."

"You seem to have investigated the matter pretty thoroughly?" said Mr. Dent.

"I have. I was down on the ground, and I pursued my search for your son and his friend Wells throughout every county of the eastern shore of Maryland, but without finding the slightest clue to their whereabouts."

"Your business with my son must have been very important to cause you to take all that trouble and expense for the purpose of meeting him."

"It is."

"May I ask the nature of it?"

The sleuth looked narrowly at the politician.

"Have you no suspicion of what it is?" he asked.

"I assure you that I have not the slightest idea of the matter," replied Mr. Dent, with a growing sense of uneasiness. "May I ask your name?"

"My name is Hawksley. I am a Central Office detective."

"May I ask why you are looking for my son and his friend?"

"Because they are wanted in connection with the shooting of Silas Hale, a well-known money lender of this city, who was killed in his home in the upper Bronx one night about a week ago. Doubtless you saw the story of the affair in the newspapers at the time."

Mr. Dent was fairly staggered.

"It seems to me this is a most extraordinary charge to bring against my son and Mr. Wells, two Princeton college boys. On what ground do you suspect them?"

"The fairly accurate personal description of them given by a witness who saw them in the room with the dead man a few moments after the tragedy, for one thing; but more particularly this paper, which was found clutched in the fingers of the corpse after their hurried departure from the house."

The detective held the promissory note before the eyes of the politician.

Mr. Dent looked at the paper, which ran as follows:

"Ninety days from date, for value received, I promise to pay to Silas Hale, or order, the sum of Five Hundred Dollars, lawful money of the United States. Indorsement guaranteed to be genuine. (Signed) HERBERT DENT."

"Do you recognize the handwriting?" asked the sleuth. The startled father made no reply, but he recognized it just the same.

"Do you recognize your own signature?" continued the detective, reversing the paper.

Across the back of it was written, apparently in Mr. Dent's handwriting, the following:

"I personally guarantee the payment of this note.

(Signed) "DUDLEY DENT."

"I never—"

"Indorsed it," interrupted the sleuth, with a shrewd smile. "I thought not. It struck me that you would not do business that way. It is clearly a forgery. An expert in handwriting has examined it in connection with the specimen of your son's writing on the other side and is of the opinion that your son did not write it. The question is—who did? Possibly it was Wells. What do you think?"

CHAPTER XI.

DUDLEY DENT SEES A LIGHT.

Mr. Dent did not know what to think.

The detective returned the note to his pocketbook.

"Mr. Dent," he said, "I suppose it is no use for me to ask you for the real address of your son and his friend, Wells?"

"If they are not at Great Oak Manor I don't know where they are," he replied, hoarsely. "I haven't heard from my son since he went away. I sent a telegram to him, care of Wells, Great Oak Manor, this morning, and there is the only reply I received."

He handed the sleuth Gay's telegram.

"It seems evident, Mr. Dent, that your son and his companion departed for parts unknown after leaving a fictitious address with you. It is up to me to find them and bring them back."

"I cannot believe that my son is mixed up in this unfortunate affair," said the politician, in a tone of intense feeling.

"Naturally. He is only a boy, a college student, and it does not seem reasonable to connect him with a murder. Still, my dear sir, facts are stubborn things. If he and his friend were innocent why should they skip out at an early hour on the morning after the tragedy leaving a fictitious address behind? I leave it to you, Mr. Dent, to say what construction is to be put on their actions when taken in connection with this promissory note found in the fingers of the dead man."

"My son is not guilty," was all Mr. Dent could say, but the look in his face and eyes showed that he was terribly worked up over the disclosure.

The sleuth rose and intimated that he was ready to go.

Mr. Dent, in a dazed way, rang for a servant, and the detective was shown out.

For an hour the politician sat like a statue in his chair, the picture of acute misery.

The dinner bell aroused him.

"I see it all," he muttered, hoarsely. "Gideon Wells is a scoundrel. He has obtained an influence over my son, and has brought the boy into this terrible predicament. He forged the indorsement on the back of the promissory note. I am sure he did. Those tell-tale scraps of paper, found in the dresser drawer, are links in the chain of his guilt. He forged that check, too, and the letter that induced my nephew to cash it, and hand the money to an accomplice of Wells'. And I have driven my only sister's child out into the world, without allowing him a fair chance to square himself. I am fittingly punished by this misfortune which has fallen on the head of my own son. Well, all that remains for me to do is to try and save my

son, make abundant reparation to my nephew, and see that justice reaches that scoundrel Wells. To that end I will spend every dollar of my fortune if necessary."

The detective went to Princeton next morning and made many discoveries concerning Gideon Wells in that old town.

Some of these he communicated to Mr. Dent at a second meeting, and then the politician made a clean breast of the forged check matter to the sleuth.

They both agreed that Wells was an artful and accomplished schemer.

It was at this meeting that the detective told the politician that he had met his nephew at the red brick house on the night of the tragedy.

The sleuth told Mr. Dent how Dave accounted for his presence on the scene, and there seemed to be no doubt that he spoke the truth.

"Well, I want to find him," said Mr. Dent. "I intend to take him back and make whatever reparation I can to him. I suppose he didn't tell you where he was going?"

"He did not. You might find out through the late Silas Hale's niece, Miss Preston. He seemed to be pretty thick with her, and I don't wonder, for she's a beautiful girl. At any rate he remained with her for two or three days to my knowledge. It is quite possible she will be able to put you on his track."

"I will call on her right away. Where does she live?"

"Where she has lived for many years—at the red brick house where her uncle met with his tragic death. It is on — Street, nearly a mile from the Tremont terminal of the elevated road, to the northwest. You had better go to the police station and get an officer to show you to the house—it will save you time, as I presume you are unfamiliar with that locality," said the detective.

After the detective's departure, Mr. Dent put on his hat and started for the red brick house to which he had been directed.

He reached it in due time and inquired for Miss Preston.

The housekeeper told him that the young lady had been sent to the country for the summer by her guardian, under her uncle's will, Lawyer Davenport.

"Can you give me her address?" asked the politician.

She said she could and went to her room to hunt it up.

In a few minutes she returned with a paper, and Mr. Dent made a copy of the writing on it.

When he got home he wrote a letter to Miss Elise Preston, stating that he was David Darnley's uncle, and that he was anxious to get into communication with the young man.

It was nearly a week before he got a reply, and then he learned that Dave was traveling for the National Historical Publishing Company, No. — Broadway, New York City.

Elise admitted she had received a letter from him that morning, inclosing his route for the following week, and she sent Mr. Dent a copy of the same.

The politician immediately wrote a letter to Dave, and addressed it to one of the towns indicated.

This letter did not reach our hero, as he received instructions from Mr. Dunne which caused him to make a

change in his route which left that town out, therefore he remained in ignorance of his uncle's change of heart toward him.

Mr. Dent waited in vain for a reply to his letter, and was about to call at the publishing house when he was hurriedly summoned to Washington on business of great importance.

In the meanwhile Detective Hawksley was trying to find a clue to the whereabouts of Herbert Dent and Gideon Wells, but met only with disappointment.

He believed the young men had gone west, and he went to Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and other cities on the chance of finding a trace of them.

It would have greatly surprised him had he learned that the pair were cutting things fat at such a prominent watering place as Bar Harbor, making no secret whatever of their names, or of the fact that they were Princeton college boys.

Thus, as we remarked in a previous chapter, summer passed away and the early days of September came around.

Dave's new route took him into Maine, and after canvassing Portland and Bangor he made the acquaintance of two young fellows of his own age named Will Withers and Joe Jackson, whose parents and family were winding up the season at Bar Harbor, and they invited him to go there with them for a few days or a week, if he could get off so long.

Two months of strenuous canvassing under a hot sun had done Dave up a good bit, for he wasn't used to such work, and he felt that a week's vacation would do him a lot of good.

He communicated his condition and wishes to Mr. Dunne, and that gentleman, feeling that Dave had done his whole duty by his employers, telegraphed him to take a week off.

Accordingly Dave accompanied his new friends to Maine's chief watering place, little dreaming that he would meet his cousin and Gideon Wells there.

CHAPTER XII.

DAVE IS TREATED TO A SURPRISE.

The Witherses and Jacksons occupied adjoining cottages and it was arranged that Dave should stay at each place four days.

Will and Joe tossed up on the train to see which should have him first, and the lot fell to Withers.

A few hours' ride over the Maine Central Railroad from Bangor landed them at Elsworth in time to catch the regular boat for Bar Harbor, which is situated at the northeast end of Mt. Desert Island.

They landed at the steamboat wharf and with their grips in their hands the three boys made their way to the Withers cottage.

Will introduced Dave to his folks and they gave him a cordial welcome.

Then they sat down to lunch, Joe joining them after reporting his return to his own people.

Will and Joe had a lot to tell about what they had been doing while away from their folks, and they monopolized the conversation.

Dave and Nellie Withers entertained each other on the opposite side of the table, and the young lady soon learned that their visitor hailed from New York City, and was the nephew of a wealthy and distinguished public man whose name she had often seen in the public papers.

She also learned that he had just graduated from a well-known Westchester (N. Y.) academy, attended only by boys whose connections were well off.

"And where have you been summering?" she asked him, expecting he would name some fashionable resort.

"I haven't been summering anywhere, Miss Withers," he answered.

"No?" she exclaimed in some surprise.

"No. I've been out traveling for a New York publishing house."

"Is it possible? Why should you do that?"

"I wanted to gain a little experience," said Dave, in an off-hand way.

"Dear me, you boys do the oddest things," laughed the young lady. "Will and Joe Jackson left us about a month ago, right in the middle of all the gaiety, to go off on some hair-brained trip they had taken into their heads. I'm sure I can't see what they have gained by it."

"Of course you don't, Nellie," cried Will, across the table. "You girls never have the times that we fellows do. But that's what you get for being a girl."

"The idea! Just as if we could help that."

After lunch Joe led the way to his cottage, as he wanted to make Dave acquainted with his folks right away.

They remained twenty minutes at the Jackson cottage and then the boys started out for a stroll about Bar Harbor.

Will and Joe pointed out various places of interest to Dave, and finally they entered a sort of casino, where there was an orchestra playing, and tables at which visitors could sit and sip cooling drinks while listening to the music and observing all that went on around them.

The boys took possession of a table not far from the orchestra, and Will asked his companions what they'd have to drink.

"I don't drink anything to speak of," replied Dave.

"Take a cream soda or something of that sort, then," said Will.

A waiter came up and Will ordered three cream sodas. The casino was pretty well attended that afternoon.

Will and Joe bowed to a great many ladies and stylishly attired girls still in their teens, and nodded to various lads of their own age, several of whom came over to their table and asked them where they had been for the past three weeks.

Will or Joe told them where they had been, but went into no particulars concerning their trip, though they answered all questions put to them.

In every case they introduced Dave as a particular friend of theirs, and the other boys expressed the pleasure they felt at making his acquaintance.

One of the tables near that occupied by Dave and his friends became vacant.

Presently a boy of nineteen, and a young man three or four years his senior, sauntering into the building and looking around, spied the table, walked over to it and sat

down with the air of people who owned a slice of the earth.

They ordered drinks, which were served to them, and then amused themselves looking around and saluting their acquaintances.

Dave did not notice them at first, but after a few minutes he happened to look in that direction and encountered the astonished stare of his cousin Herbert Dent.

Our hero was equally surprised to see Herbert way down in Maine.

Glancing at his cousin's companion he saw it was Gideon Wells.

At that moment Wells looked at Dave, and recognized him got up and walked over to the table.

"Upon my word, this is a great surprise to meet you here, my dear fellow," he said, holding out his hand in a friendly way.

"Not more than for me to see you and my cousin here," replied Dave. "How long have you been here?"

"Since the first week in July."

"That's a long time. Let me make you acquainted with my friends. Will Withers, Mr. Wells. Joe Jackson, Mr. Wells."

Wells shook hands with the two boys and said he was delighted to know them.

"Bring Herbert over," said Dave.

Herbert came after some hesitation, and Dave introduced him to Will and Joe.

"Where are you stopping, Darnley?" asked Wells.

"With Will Withers at present," replied Dave.

"You disappeared rather suddenly from the house, Darnley—didn't even let Herb or I know you were going off somewhere," said Wells.

"Yes," replied Dave, flushing up; "circumstances over which I had no control caused me to light out in a rather unconventional way."

Herbert grinned with a knowing look which seemed to say that he knew why Dave had taken his hurried departure.

He and Wells drew chairs up to the boys' table and proceeded to make themselves at home there.

"How long do you expect to stay here, Darnley?" asked Wells. "Till the season closes?"

"Not over a week, then I must get back to business," replied Dave.

"Business!" exclaimed Wells. "Are you working?"

"I'm traveling for a New York publishing house."

"How long have you been at it?"

"About two months."

"You don't say. Have you given up the idea of coming to Princeton?"

"I have."

Herbert grinned again, rather maliciously.

"How came you to tackle work, and during your vacation time, too," continued Wells, who knew the reason as well as Herbert did, but pretended ignorance.

"I had my reasons, which it is hardly necessary for me to state."

"Well, I must say that you are a most uncommon chap. Come, Herb, I guess it's time we were making a move."

He said good-by to Dave and his two friends, and taking Herbert by the arm they left the building together.

"So that's your cousin, and he's the son of the Hon. Dudley Dent," said Withers.

"Yes," replied Dave.

"This meeting was rather a surprise to you both."

"It certainly was," admitted the other.

"Well, you never can tell when you'll run up against somebody you know at these resorts," remarked Joe Jackson. "A good many New Yorkers come down here to finish up the summer after spending the best part of the season elsewhere."

"Suppose we get a move on," suggested Withers.

Dave and Joe were ready to go, so the three left the casino.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CROOKED GAME.

Bar Harbor adjoins the finest scenery in Mount Desert Island, and the boys spent the next two days exploring the recesses of Otter Creek, whose wild mountain passes equal in grandeur the Notch of the White Hills, and rambling about the gigantic cliffs of Great Head, Schooner Head and the other bold, rocky promontories rising for hundreds of feet directly from the sea, which make the island so fascinating to the landscape and marine painter.

During that time Dave saw nothing more of his cousin or Gideon Wells.

He had not asked them where they were stopping.

After staying the first four days at the Withers cottage, Dave carried his grip across the lawn to the Jackson cottage, and took up his quarters in a room adjoining Joe's.

He was having so good a time that he looked forward with regret to the hour when he would have to part from his new friends and face the stern realities of life once more.

But he wasn't a boy to hang back when duty called.

He had something besides the necessity of providing for himself to spur him on, and that was the bright eyes of Elise Preston.

She was his star of hope and encouragement—the goal of his ultimate ambition—and his blood always quickened in his veins when he thought of her.

On the evening of his fifth day at Bar Harbor he got separated in some way from Will and Joe, after they started out together, and he wandered around to one of the hotels of the place.

He entered the house and walking around presently found himself in a passage which led him into a small enclosure near the steward's office and the kitchen.

Turning to retrace his steps he came to a window protected by blinds through which the electric light shone.

The window was wide open on the inside, and as he was about to pass it his attention was arrested by familiar voices.

Peering through the shutters he looked into a small room furnished with a single round table and four chairs.

Two of the chairs were drawn up to the table, and on these sat Herbert Dent and his college friend, Gideon Wells.

They were playing cards, and the money that lay before them showed that they were playing for stakes.

A bottle with a whiskey label and two glasses stood on the table.

Herbert looked as if he was not exactly himself, for his hair was awry, and his eyes blinked in a sleepy and idiotic fashion at his cards when not directed at his companion.

"I never had such rotten luck in my life," he said, thickly, as he threw down his hand and looked at Wells as he gathered in a small bunch of bills.

"Nonsense! Things are bound to come your way presently," chuckled Wells, as he began to shuffle the pack preparatory to a new deal.

Dave regarded the scene and the participants with some surprise.

He had never known before that his cousin indulged in intoxicating drink, or that he played cards for any considerable stakes.

As he watched them he was treated to another and more disagreeable surprise.

He saw Wells deftly extract a couple of tens from the pack and drop them into his lap.

After each had put up a dollar bill to open the pot Wells manipulated the pack so that he dealt Herbert two aces, two kings and a queen.

Dave got a view of Wells' hand and saw that he held two tens, an ace, and two lesser cards, which he discarded, drawing in place of them a queen and a nine spot.

Herbert called for one card, throwing out the queen.

"You must have a good hand this time," remarked Wells, dealing him another ace.

"Oh, so-so," replied Herbert, pushing a \$5 bill forward.

"That looks like business," said Wells. "Well, seeing that I'm ahead of the game, I'll take a chance that you're bluffing. I'll see your V and go you ten better," and he put up the money, at the same time dropping the queen and nine spot into his lap and picking up the two tens.

"I'll copper your ten and raise you ten more," said Herbert, with ill-concealed exultation, for with three aces and two kings he felt sure of winning the pot.

Wells seemed to consider whether he would see the raise or not.

"I believe you're bluffing me," he said, with a sardonic grin.

"Maybe I am, but it's up to you to call me," replied Herbert.

"No, I won't call you. I'll see how much nerve you've got. I see your ten and go you twenty better."

"You can't bluff me that way," laughed Herbert, in a silly way. "There's my twenty, and he shoved up three fives, and I'll go you another twenty," putting his hand in his pocket for more money.

"Hold on there, Herb, you've only put up fifteen," said Wells, pushing the bills apart with his finger.

"That's so," admitted Herbert, and then he put up another five and a \$20 bill.

That made \$112 in the pot, and Dave almost gasped at the size of the stakes.

"How much money have you got left, Herb?" asked Wells.

"Why?"

"I'm going to see your twenty and go you as much as you've got."

Herbert gave a gasp.

He began to realize that his companion must have a corking hand after all.

"Don't do that," he fluttered, losing any nerve he might have had. "I'll take back that extra twenty and call you."

"Too late, Herb, your money is up, and I've seen it and go you, well, \$50 better."

"Oh, I say, Gid, I don't want to risk any more," said Herbert. "There's too much up now."

"Are you going to back out?" sneered Wells. "If you are I'll rake in the stakes."

"Take back your \$70 and let it go the way I said. There'll be 'most \$100 in the pot then."

"Couldn't think of it. I know you're bluffing me now," chuckled Wells.

"No, I'm not bluffing. I've got a good hand, but I don't want to play for so much."

"Why didn't you call me, then? You had chances to do it."

"I thought you'd call me."

"Well, I'll take back the \$50 to oblige you and make it \$20. See that and call me."

"All right," said Herbert, desperately. "I'll see you and call you. Hold on, let's see how much is in the pot," he added, after putting up the \$20.

The bills were counted and they footed up \$172.

"I've got four tens and an ace," said Wells, spreading his cards out.

Herbert gave a gasp.

"I've three aces and two kings," he said.

"Four of a kind beat three aces any day," laughed Wells, reaching for the stakes.

Dave, whose indignation was bubbling over, thought it time to interfere.

He grabbed the blinds and pulled them open.

"Hold on there, Mr. Wells," he cried, "you haven't won that money fairly."

CHAPTER XIV.

A GOLDEN SHOWER.

Herbert scowled at his cousin, evidently resenting his appearance.

An unpleasant look also came over Wells' face.

"What do you mean by saying that I didn't win fairly?" he said, aggressively.

"Because you didn't," replied Dave firmly.

"What do you know about it? You're not a card player," sneered Wells.

"I can play, but I never play for money."

"No, I s'pose not. You're one of those chaps who look at a dollar a long time before you let it get away from you."

"That fact needn't worry you if I am," retorted Dave, angrily. "At any rate, I wouldn't swindle a confiding friend out of his money."

"What's that?" roared Wells, angrily. "Do you call me a swindler?"

"I do, for that's what you are."

"You shall answer for that."

"I expect to answer for it now. Herbert, look in Mr. Wells' lap, you will find two cards, a queen and a nine spot, which he drew on the discard. Before he began to deal he dropped two tens there, and as soon as you began to raise the stakes he picked them up and dropped the queen and nine spot in their places. That gave him the four tens by which he claims the stakes. The pot is rightfully yours, for if he had played fair his hand would have contained only two tens instead of four."

"You're a liar!" roared Wells, rising and throwing the pack at Dave's face.

The two cards he had held out fell to the floor and Herbert saw them.

In a moment Dave sprang in through the window and grabbed Wells.

"You'll take that insult back or I'll break every bone in your body," he said, tensely.

In another moment the two were struggling around the room, making a terrible racket that attracted people from the outside.

Although Wells was four years older than Dave, and something of an athlete, he found that he had met his equal, if not his master, in the boy.

The chairs were scattered and the table went over.

Herbert, who began to understand that he had been cheated, gathered up the money and put it in his pocket.

Then he opened the door and rushed from the room, leaving his cousin and Wells to fight it out.

The scrap, however, did not last long.

In swinging Wells around, Dave tripped and they fell over the table.

Dave was on top and his weight flung Wells' head against the edge of the table so hard that the Princeton man was stunned, and his arms dropped by his side.

Just then several of the hotel employees rushed in and separated Dave from him.

They picked Wells up and carried him outside, where they soon brought him to.

Dave was asked what the trouble was, and he bluntly told his questioner that he had caught the young man cheating his cousin out of a considerable sum of money at a game of cards.

As card playing for money was not supposed to be permitted at the hotel the attaches decided that the matter must be hushed up.

Dave was told to keep the matter to himself, and Wells was also taken one side and interviewed to the same effect.

As for Herbert, he had disappeared and could not be seen anywhere.

Dave left the hotel and hunted around for Will and Joe. He found them after a time.

"Where have you been? We've been looking for you for more than an hour," said Will.

Dave replied that after getting separated from them he had gone to the Blank Hotel and walked in, as he had never been there.

Then, on their promise of secrecy, he told them of the incident we have just described.

Of course, Will and Joe were much surprised at Dave's story.

"You ought to hunt your cousin up and give him the tip straight," said Joe.

"And probably get snubbed for my trouble," replied Dave. "We never have pulled well together."

"Then it's your duty to notify your uncle," said Will.

"I'd rather speak to Herbert himself. If his father heard about his goings on he'd pull him over the coals so hard that my cousin would think a cyclone had hit him. I don't want to put him up against that if I can help it."

Next morning Joe proposed that they take a walk into the interior of the island and pay a visit to an old ruined mill near the top of a steep hill.

Providing themselves with a light lunch, for they couldn't tell when they'd get back, the three boys started on their excursion.

Their way led part of the way through a dense wood, where they occasionally caught sight of a squirrel or a rabbit.

"Say, there's a house ahead," said Dave. "Let's see if we can get a glass of milk."

They got the milk, paid for it and continued on.

About noon they reached the foot of the hill on top of which they could see the ruin they had come to visit.

When they reached the mill they tried to decipher a date that had been cut in the heavy beam above the doorway, but were unable to do so.

"It's a pretty old building," said Dave.

"Bet your life it is," replied Joe. "Must have been put up as long ago as the time of the Revolution. Maine was part of Massachusetts then."

"Come inside," said Will.

They followed him in, and found the building dark and crumbly.

A wide, solid looking ladder led to what had once been a floor above, but it was now open to the sky and the four winds of heaven.

"Not much to see after all," said Dave, as they stood at the top of the ladder.

"No; but it will be something to say that we've been in such an old building," said Will.

They returned to the lower floor and looked around.

"Somebody has been here and left that hammer and lantern," said Joe.

"There's a trap-door under the ladder. There must be a cellar underneath," said Dave.

He reached down, seized a ring and pulled on the trap. Somewhat to his surprise it yielded easily.

"It works pretty easy for an old trap," he remarked.

The three looked down into the dark depths beneath.

"I wouldn't go down there," said Will.

"You couldn't see anything if you did," replied Joe.

Dave picked up the lantern and looked at it.

"There's part of a candle in this," he said. "I'm going to light it and then we can explore the cellar."

"You won't find anything but cobwebs and dirt," said Will. "What's the use?"

"I'm going down anyway," said Dave. "Who knows

but that we might find a chest of treasure," he added, with a grin, as he struck a match and lit the candle.

They followed without any great enthusiasm.

They landed on an earth floor about ten feet deep.

Flashing the lantern around they saw plenty of dirt and cobwebs, the latter hanging in black festoons from different parts of the ceiling.

The only things they saw in the place were an empty barrel and a home-made ladder.

"I wonder why that ladder is here?" said Dave. "There is no dirt on it so it can't have been here long."

"Ask something easier. Somebody left it here, to be sure he'd find it when he came back after it, I suppose," said Joe.

"Say, fellows, I see a trap-door in the ceiling. I wonder what that was used for?"

Dave placed the ladder under it, climbed up and tried to push the bolt back.

"What are you doing that for?" asked Joe.

"Just for fun."

"There wouldn't be any fun to you if opened suddenly and let a lot of dirt into your eyes."

"No danger of it opening suddenly. The bolt is so rusted that it won't work at all."

"Let's get out of here," said Will, moving toward the steps.

"Go up and fetch me that hammer."

"All right. I'll get the hammer."

"While you're up there see if you can tell whether the trap opens down or up," said Dave.

Will went upstairs, picked up the hammer and then walked over to the spot where he supposed the trap-door was, but could see no signs of one.

He reported the fact when he returned to the cellar.

"That so?" said Dave. "Hand me the hammer and I'll see whether it's a trap or not."

Dave gave the trap-door a blow with the hammer and the bolt broke.

Down fell the door and with it a shower of gold coins.

Cries of astonishment escaped his two friends, and Dave descended the ladder.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

"My gracious!" cried Dave. "Money! and gold at that!"

He stooped and picked up some of the coins, and his companions did likewise.

Most of the money had fallen through the rungs of the ladder and lay in a heap on the earth; but some of it had rebounded from Dave's head and shoulders, and this lay scattered all about.

They proved to be old, discolored \$10 pieces.

It was some minutes before the boys got over their astonishment.

"You're a lucky chap, Dave," said Joe.

"You mean we're all lucky," returned Dave.

"No, I don't. The find is yours. We're out of it."

"How are you? We're together, and you fellows have an equal right to share in the money."

"We don't want any of it, for Joe and I have each got

a fortune coming to us when we're twenty-one. You have to earn your living, so it will come in good for you," said Will.

Dave, however, wanted to argue the matter, for there wasn't anything selfish in his nature; but the boys stuck to their resolution not to share in his luck.

"Come, now, let's pick it up. Too bad there isn't something around here we could put it in," said Will.

They gathered up the scattered pieces first.

"I think there's one or two behind that barrel," said Joe.

Dave pushed it aside and it rolled over, revealing a meal bag underneath.

"How lucky!" he exclaimed. "Just what we want."

They put the money into the bag and it made a heavy load, as they discovered when Dave lifted it.

"This is going to be a nice job getting it to Bar Harbor," said Dave, when he had landed the bag outside the door.

"Consider what it's worth. Most any man would strain his back and welcome the chance to do it if he could secure all that money."

"There must be something like \$30,000 of it, judging by its weight."

"We'll count it and see when we get to the cottage," said Joe.

"If we had three bags the job would be an easy one," said Will.

"We can make it fairly easy by finding a stout limb of a tree that isn't too long and suspend the bag from the center of it. Then the weight will be equally divided between two of us," said Dave.

"Good idea," said Joe. "I'll look for one."

It didn't take him long to find a suitable stick, and in a few minutes they started on their return journey with the bag between Joe and Dave.

"Hold on, fellows," said Will, when they reached the foot of the hill.

"What's the matter?" asked Dave.

"Let's lunch. No use carrying our provender back with us. I'd rather carry my share in my stomach than in my pocket."

Will's suggestion met with instant approval, and the boys sat down by the roadside and ate what they had brought along.

"A glass of milk would go fine with this," said Joe.

"Go catch a cow and milk her then," laughed Will.

"Point out the cow and I'm on," grinned Joe.

"We'll get the milk when we reach that house on our way back," said Dave.

They got along without the milk for the present, and after a rest started on again.

It was four o'clock when they reached the Jackson cottage, and the trio went up to Dave's room.

The money was dumped out and counted, and it footed up \$18,680.

"That isn't so bad," said Will.

"Suppose you fellows divide the \$680? Eighteen thousand is enough for me," said Dave.

Will and Joe agreed to that, and pocketed \$340 each.

They told the story of their find at the dinner table to

their respective families, but their astonished auditors were requested to keep the news a strict secret, until they returned home, at any rate.

When they went to the casino that evening the cashier, whom they knew, told them there had been some excitement in the place that afternoon.

"What about?"

"Two young fellows, who have been here all season—their names are Gideon Wells and Herbert Dent—were arrested by a detective from New York."

"Arrested!" exclaimed Dave, in astonishment. "What for?"

"The officer wouldn't say what the charge was. He took them with him on the five o'clock boat, which connects with the Bangor and Boston express."

Dave couldn't imagine what his cousin and Wells were wanted for, and had to give it up.

Dave bought a new grip and divided his money between the two.

Monday morning came around, and bidding adieu to his friends he started for Bangor, promising to visit the boys at their homes in Boston.

When he reached his hotel he found several letters awaiting him.

Two were in Elise's handwriting and he opened and read them first.

One of them, which had been three weeks in reaching him, had the following surprise for Dave:

"It will astonish you to learn that I received a note from your uncle requesting me to furnish him with your address, as he said he wanted to communicate with you. I copied your last route in Massachusetts and sent it to him. I trust this means something good for you, dear."

"I wonder if my uncle has found out that I did not forge that check?" thought Dave.

The next letter he picked up bore the imprint of the publishing house, and contained a check for his vacation week's salary, without the usual expense addition.

There were also some instructions concerning his work for the forthcoming week.

The last letter also bore the imprint of his publishers.

He found that it contained a letter addressed to him in his uncle's handwriting.

"Now I'll learn what is in the wind," he thought.

He eagerly tore it open and found a long letter from his uncle, who said he had discovered that he had acted wrongfully toward Dave and earnestly begged his pardon.

The letter ended thus:

"Drop everything and come home at once. I am in great trouble over Herbert, who has got himself into very serious trouble through his connection with that young scoundrel, Wells. I inclose a draft on Boston for \$100. Make use of it."

Dave, glad as he would have been to start for New York at once, felt that he could not, in justice to his employers, who had treated him well, drop the business before the firm had sent somebody to fill his place.

After considering matters he sent an explanatory telegram to his uncle, saying he would return as soon as he could consistently do so.

Then he wrote a long letter to the manager of the pub-

lishing house, explaining the change in his prospects, and how it would be necessary for him to give up the job, at the same time thanking him for the consideration he had received since he went to work for the firm.

Of course, he had to write a long letter to Elise before he went to bed, telling her of the bang-up time he had had at Bar Harbor; how he had found \$18,000 in the old mill, and the particulars of the letter he had received from his uncle.

Next morning he went to the Bangor National Bank and bought an \$18,000 draft on New York with his gold.

Three days later he got a letter from the manager of his firm, expressing regret that Dave was obliged to sever his connection with the house, and complimenting him for the progress he had made since he started out.

He was informed that his successor would connect with him on Saturday and take the work off his hands.

Dave wrote Elise that he would be in New York Sunday, and he sent his uncle word that he would be home that day.

He reached New York by boat Sunday morning, and received a warm welcome from his uncle.

Then he learned of the trouble that had threatened Herbert, and was amazed to find out it was Herbert and Wells who had been at Silas Hale's house on the night the money lender was shot.

When they were taken back to New York, Wells concluded it would be best to tell the truth, and did so.

This let Herbert, who corroborated the story, out of his scrape, and the fact that it was established that the money lender had been shot with his own weapon, found in his hand, caused the authorities to release Wells also.

Wells made a full confession to Mr. Dent concerning his forgery work, and the politician finally concluded not to prosecute him, with the understanding that he would have nothing further to do with his son.

Dave went to Princeton with Herbert and in due time graduated.

Then he and Herbert were established in business by the politician, and soon after he married Elise Preston, who had come into full possession of her property.

Dave never regretted that he was driven to work, for it not only enlightened him greatly in the ways of the world, but brought him a small fortune "from a shoe string."

THE END.

Read "THE WAY TO MAKE MONEY; OR TAKING CHANCES IN WALL STREET," which will be the next number (240) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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GOOD STORIES.

According to the Railroad Age Gazette, the Mexican Railway, which recently equipped thirty of its locomotives to burn oil, has been unable to get an adequate supply of the fuel, and has eighteen engines reconverted into coal burners. The oil company which failed to carry out its contract, it is reported, bears the expense of the change.

The first section of the Shanghai-Hangchow-Ningpo Railway, which extends from Shanghai to Frengch'ing, a distance of 38 miles, was opened for traffic not long since. This line was built under Chinese engineers. The preliminary survey of the line was made in the winter of 1907. There are 10 stations and 48 steel bridges on this section. The longest bridges have spans of 440 feet, 400 feet and 200 feet, respectively. The average cost of construction was \$35,000 per mile.

While it may not be generally known, it is a fact, nevertheless, that many skins of wild animals in western North Carolina are annually taken and that these skins have a handsome intrinsic value. Mink and fox skins, as well as bear skins and deer skins, are marketed every fall and winter at good figures. Recently dealers in skins and furs made a shipment of mink skins to New York. The skins were baled, and while making a pile of no great size will bring, it is said, something like \$7,000. The dealers also secured for shipment recently 150 fox skins. These skins are taken by hunters and trappers in the western section of the State and marketed here for shipment to the Northern and Eastern markets.

Within the next half dozen years Kansas will be the most compactly settled State in the West. By 1915 there will not be an acre of government land left within the borders of the State with the exception of the military and Indian reservations, if filing by homesteaders continues at the present rate, according to J. G. Wood, receiver of the United States Land Office at Topeka. Since the Colby Land Office was discontinued there are but two federal land offices in Kansas, the one at Topeka and the Dodge City office. In the Topeka district there is left a total of about thirty thousand acres of public land, while in the Dodge City district the total is now about two hundred thousand acres, making the total for the State something like two hundred and thirty thousand acres. When it is remembered that only a few years ago the public domain in Kansas ran into millions of acres, the present comparatively small total shows the rapid rate at which the public has been taking up homesteads within the last few years.

The average daily mail received at the White House is, of course, very large. The President cannot, it follows, read these letters as an ordinary business man reads his morning mail, but by a carefully developed system their contents are in substance presented to him. A corps of confidential clerks open the letters and give them a first reading. They are then carefully sorted. Many of them do not need to go to the President, as they are simply recommendations for office. These after being courteously acknowledged, are referred to the proper departments, and placed on file there until the subject to which each of them relates can be taken up for consideration. Many of the letters are purely formal, or contain requests for something which cannot be granted. These the clerks answer and the President's secretary signs. The requests for charity are so many that a special "form" has been devised to be used in answering them. They are all alike necessarily and politely refused. All letters which the President ought to see are carefully briefed—that is, a slip is pinned at the top of each letter, and on this is a typewritten synopsis of its contents, telling who the writer is and what he has to present. Frequently the President is sufficiently interested by the brief to cause him to read the whole letter. Sometimes the communication is referred to a Cabinet officer, in which case the slip is retained at the White House and filed away. When a large number of persons write on the same subject the letters are bunched, and the brief at the top gives the names of those who present one argument, and in another list the persons who offer a different view. This is an admirable way of "jumping at conclusions," made necessary by the excessive burdens of the Presidential office.

JOKES AND JESTS.

"You have a model husband," said the lady who was congratulating the bride. The next day the bride bethought her to look up the word "model" in the dictionary and this is what she found: "Model—A small imitation of the real thing."

Some one was saying something pretty to George Ade in regard to his books and plays. "Thank you," said the young author, gravely. "You remind me of something. A little while after the appearance of my first book I went to spend a week in a summer resort outside of Chicago. The landlord of the modest hotel said to me: 'Mr. Ade, you are a literary man, I believe?' I blushed and smiled and answered that I had written a few trifles, nothing more. 'I have several literary men stopping here,' the landlord went on. 'Well, I'm rather glad of that,' said I. 'Yes,' said the landlord. 'I like literary men. They never object to paying in advance. They are used to it.'"

In addressing a mother's congress while in this country the Chinese statesman, Wu Ting Fang, said: "All the mothers before me will some day be mothers-in-law, so I'm going to tell you a little story to remember when that happy day arrives. The parlor maid in the house of a young married couple, answered the doorbell one morning, and a few moments later went upstairs to her mistress. 'If you please, ma'am,' she said, 'the strangest lady is downstairs. She won't give her name and she has taken off her coat and hat, and she opened the two closets and rummaged through them and then she looked at the windows and shook her head and she rubbed her finger over the mantel and the piano and then she held it up to see the dust on it, and now she is—.' 'Dear me!' interrupted her mistress. 'My husband's mother wasn't expected back from Texas till December.'"

THE TELL-TALE HAT

By Horace Appleton.

Riding up in the cars from Long Branch one summer afternoon I happened to meet an old sporting friend, named Paul Horton.

"You're just the man I want to see," said he as I took a seat beside him. "I have been somewhat under the weather, and I went to a quiet watering-place on the Jersey coast to recuperate. As quiet as it was, however, I fear that a very tragic affair has taken place there."

"Let us hear about it," I replied.

"At the hotel where I put up an old gentleman and his daughter are stopping. The old man is well fixed, and the daughter is a perfect fairy, and a great favorite, especially with the men, and one in particular, a young fellow from Philadelphia, by the name of Philip Day, who disappeared two nights ago in a mysterious fashion. I fear he has met with foul play."

"Let me hear more about the case."

Daisy and her father are from New York City, and they have a friend down there with them, a Spaniard named Carlos Gomez, who claims that he is very wealthy, with a title to match. He has been making fierce love to the young lady, in which he has the support of her father, as the old fellow is taken with his airs and his title."

"Do you think he's a humbug, Paul?"

"I do—and a blamed sight worse."

"Is the young lady in love with the Spaniard?"

"I'm sure she isn't, though she accepts him as her escort. She cares a great deal for Phil Day, the young Philadelphian, and she is now in great distress, as she is almost assured of his death."

"How's that?"

"Daisy went out boating with the Spaniard yesterday morning. The fellow is a splendid oarsman, and the young girl delights in the water. They were sweeping around the rock outside the bay when the young girl saw a dark object in the water.

"Stop the boat till I catch that hat!" she cried to the Spaniard, but he pulled on without appearing to hear her, and she called to him again, looking at him at the same time. As she told me afterward, she noticed he was deadly pale and that he gasped for breath as he stopped rowing. The hat floated by at the moment, and Daisy reached over the side of the boat and caught it, as the Spaniard cried excitedly:

"Don't touch it! It may come from a fever infected vessel!"

"Why, it's a new hat!" said Daisy, holding it up before him. "Dear me! I've seen it somewhere before. As I live, it belongs to Mr. Philip Day! How strange!"

"Was the young man missing at that time?" I asked.

"Daisy did not know that he was. When they put back to the hotel she heard that he had not been seen since the previous night, and that he had not slept in his room."

"But he may have been called back to Philadelphia suddenly," I remarked.

"We have telegraphed to his house in Philadelphia and there are no tidings of him. The young man has disappeared mysteriously, leaving no sign behind him except the hat found on the waves, which has a bullet hole in the back of it."

After conversing more fully on the subject it was arranged that I should go down to the hotel as a stranger to all, and shadow the Spaniard for a while. On the following morning

I started for the hotel on the Jersey coast, and when I arrived there the mysterious affair had assumed a different bearing altogether. The head of the Philadelphia firm where Phil Day had occupied a confidential position, had just arrived before me, and it was soon announced that the missing young man had embezzled a large amount of money.

Paul Horton was thoroughly puzzled about the whole affair. While having a confidential chat with me on the matter he said: "That young man was a rival of mine, but I can't believe that he was dishonest, even though the proofs are strong against him."

I had a theory of my own about the affair and I resolved to work it out. Then I commenced to shadow the Spaniard, who was a tall, muscular man, with marked features and a dark skin.

The first night I was at the hotel I discovered that Carlos Gomez was a great gambler—on the strict quiet. Then Paul Horton and I "put up a job" on him. I was supposed to be a man of means, out for a holiday, while Paul was really with a snug fortune, and he was enjoying himself as a gentleman should. While I was never much of a gambler, I can play what is called a fair game of poker, and Paul was a ~~crook~~ at it. We were not supposed to know each other until that night, when a quiet game was proposed by Paul, in which the Spaniard was only too willing to join.

We soon found out that Gomez was a regular sharper. He could manipulate the cards in a manner that would have made "the heathen Chinee" as jealous as fury. We were playing in Paul's room, and the game had not progressed far when I swore that my friend was cheating.

Paul sprang up on the instant, and dealt me a smart slap across the face.

I pulled out my revolver, crying: "I'll have your life for that, you infernal scoundrel! Draw and defend yourself!"

"I have no weapon!" cried Paul.

"Then get one and come out with me!" I cried. "Have you a revolver, sir?" I asked, turning to the Spaniard.

After some persuasion the Spaniard drew forth a revolver, saying: "If you must fight, gentlemen, had you not better retire to some secluded spot?"

We accepted his suggestion, and were soon facing each other in a lonesome spot on the beach. The Spaniard gave the word and we both fired on the instant. I clapped my hand to my breast, uttered a fearful groan, and fell on the sand. "I am a dead man!" I groaned. "Fly, or you will be tried for murder! I hear some one coming!"

They both ran off as if the hangman was at their heels, and the Spaniard was in the lead. He did not even wait to pick up his revolver, which Paul had dropped when I fell on the sand. When they were out of sight I picked myself up and then secured the Spaniard's weapon. I was shaking the dry sand from my clothes when Daisy Fowler, who was in our confidence, appeared from behind a rock.

"Have you got the revolver?" she asked.

"I have, Miss Fowler," I answered, and I will soon see if one of the bullets fits the hole in the hat."

On leaving the young lady I hastened to the railway station, changing my appearance on the way before taking the train for Philadelphia. I put up at the Girard House, disguised as an old man, and in the morning I sallied forth to make certain inquiries about Phil Day.

Paul Horton and the Spaniard arrived at the hotel in the afternoon, and they were also disguised. I saw them at the supper table, and I could perceive that the Spaniard was suffering from severe mental terror. When the Spaniard retired after supper I had a chance to speak with Paul.

"How does it work?" I asked.

"He's as cunning as a fox, and I can't get a thing out of

him. He refused to take any of the cash in your trunk, and I took it all. He's scared to death."

"Where is he going to-night?"

"He has dropped a slight hint about calling on a Spanish friend."

"I'll shadow him and while he is out you search his valise."

"The fellow has never let it out of his hand since we left Jersey. I think he means to give me the slip."

"He's playing a deep game, but we'll corner him. Let us separate before he comes down. There he is now!"

I slipped away from my friend and followed the Spaniard. He led me a long chase before he pulled up at a house on Vine street, beyond Broad. On ringing the bell the Spaniard was admitted by a young woman, who shook hands with him in a cordial manner.

There was no light in the house except in the back room on the second floor, and the Venetian blinds were closed. Working very cautiously, I soon reached the top of a grape arbor at the back of the house, and then peeped in through the blinds. There were four persons in the room, one of whom was lying on a bed with a bandage on his head, apparently sound asleep. Another was the handsome young woman who had admitted the Spaniard, the latter being now engaged in conversation with her. I could not see the features of the fourth person, as his back was turned toward the window, but I could make out that he was a stout man, above the average height.

"Oh, you are a fool!" said the woman, addressing the Spaniard in excited tones.

"But what could I do?" remonstrated the Spaniard. "I acted wisely, I think."

"You acted like a vile coward, as you always do. We should not have spared that imbecile asleep there now. Those men duped you. They were detectives. It was a mock duel. You were duped."

"But one of them is at the Girard House with me now—"

"And I'll be sworn the other is there, also, if he is not tracking you. Gracious! What is that?"

The woman's exclamation was caused by the breaking down of the woodwork of the arbor, which had given way under me with a crash. I struck on my head and lay stunned for some moments. Just as I was recovering my senses I was seized by a pair of powerful arms, and a voice hissed in my ear: "Wretch of a spy, you will die, or you will swear to do my bidding! Make no outcry, or I will stab you to the heart!"

I made up my mind to "play 'possum" for a time and trust to my good fortune to get me out of the scrape.

"The villain is senseless," said the man when he found that I did not speak or attempt to resist.

Although I dared not open my eyes, I judged by the voices around me that my captor had been joined by his companions.

The two men lifted me from the ground, and were bearing me into the house, when I raised my right knee with great force and struck the big man on the nose. Almost at the same moment my clenched fist went up and caught the Spaniard under the chin. The Spaniard yelled with pain as he fell back. The other man was half stunned for the moment, and before either of them could recover himself I had them covered with my revolvers. "You are my prisoners! Resist, and I will blow your brains out!" I cried.

"Cowards! cowards!" cried the woman, "to let one man conquer you! He is alone, and he must be slain before—"

"Hold on, madam," I interrupted, "and stand right where you are, or I'll kill your friends!"

"Don't kill me, and I'll confess all!" yelled the cowardly Spaniard.

"Traitorous wretch!"

As the woman gave vent to this exclamation she flung a dagger at the prostrate man, and it struck him in the breast.

A cry of agony burst from the Spaniard, while a dark form darted into the yard and seized the woman. It was Paul Horton.

Keeping the two rascals covered with my weapons, I made them walk through the alley to the street, preceded by Paul and the woman. When we reached the front of the house I yelled loudly for the police and we soon had plenty of help on hand.

Giving the three prisoners in charge of three officers, Paul and I, with three other members of the force, entered.

When Paul saw the face of the wounded man on the bed he exclaimed:

"My heavens! If it isn't Phil Day!"

The young man was sleeping under the influence of a drug, but he was soon aroused.

The wounded Spaniard laid bare the whole plot that night. The rascal's real name was Rarez, and he was from Cadiz, Spain. He had a beautiful sister, who was as artful as himself, but possessed of more courage. They were compelled to fly from their native city, and they hastened to New York, where they soon got into trouble. They then fled to Philadelphia, where they lived honestly for a while, as far as was known. The young Spanish girl fell in love with the head bookkeeper of the firm by whom Phil Day was employed and became his wife. Urged on by his wife, the unfortunate man commenced to pilfer from the firm, until he had embezzled a large amount of money. The cunning woman then conceived a bold plan for saving her husband's character, and Phil Day was selected as the victim.

Through some skillful forgeries it was made to appear that the trusted young salesman had appropriated the purloined funds; but it was also necessary to get him out of the way. When absent on a vacation the young man found himself at the Jersey hotel, where he met young Daisy Fowler, and fell in love with her. Carlos Gomez soon appeared on the scene, and it turned out that he had met Daisy in New York, although her family were not aware of his real character.

The Spaniard enticed Phil Day to a lonesome spot on the beach, where his sister and her husband were lying in wait. The guilty bookkeeper sprang out on Phil and dealt him a blow with a club, intending to knock him senseless, but the brave young fellow warded off the blow and closed with his assailant, calling on the treacherous Spaniard to aid him.

Then the vicious woman fired at Phil Day from behind. The ball passed through his hat and struck him on the back of the head, inflicting a serious wound and rendering him senseless.

The guilty pair were about to finish their work when the Spaniard protested. As a compromise it was arranged that Phil should be conveyed to Philadelphia in a covered wagon and kept there until he either died or was otherwise disposed of.

The tell-tale hat fell on the beach in the struggle, and it was overlooked until a wave washed it out to sea.

The three conspirators were tried and convicted, and they all received heavy sentences, as they well deserved.

Phil Day recovered his health and strength, and Daisy Fowler became his bride.

There is a fancy frame in a certain house in New York to-day, and it is highly embellished as an ornament.

In that frame may be seen the object that served to rescue Phil Day.

It is the tell-tale hat.

The fact that the bullet hole in the hat was not caused by the Spaniard's revolver proved to me that he had accomplices in the crime.

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